



**SOCIO - RELIGIOUS ARENA AND THE  
RELATIONSHIP AMONG VARIOUS COMMUNITIES  
DURING MUGHAL PERIOD**

**THESIS**  
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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis, "*Socio-Religious Arena and the Relationship among Various Communities during Mughal Period*", submitted by **Mr. Mohammad Abbas Mehdi** is the original research work of the candidate and is suitable for submission to the Examiners and for the award of the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in History**.

Dated: ..15/8/2015.....

  
(Prof. S.L.H. Moini)  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The present study seeks to investigate the pattern of relationship amongst the various communities, especially between the Hindus and the Muslims, during the Mughal period and it also emphasizes the trends of religious and social synthesis and linguistic assimilation resulting in what can be best described as the growth of a sense of integration in national life. Furthermore, inter-religious relationship between Islam and other minor religious sects, e.g. Jainism and Sikhism etc. has also been taken into consideration. The study is largely centred on Northern India, i.e. the Indo-Gangetic basin which was the heartland of the Mughal Empire and remained in its possession for the longest; references of Deccan and South India are there but not in abundance. The timeline is roughly from the fifteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries, although to show the groundwork of the process of assimilation, the time-span from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries has also been taken into account. The theoretical framework adopted here is the assumption that the state headed by the Sultans formed the strongest arm of relationship amongst the various communities which definitely played its part in order to shape it up besides a profound incorporating contribution made by the Sufis and the *Bhaktas*. The Mughal state headed by its tolerant despots produced an encouraging environment in bringing Hinduism and Islam even closer during the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries—a process which had already started but was unsupplied with appropriate institutional support. Aurangzeb was, no doubt, an exception in the process with a distinctive and rigid outlook but the later part of his reign is marked by a sense of political pragmatism and casting away of religious idealism by him which exerted a considerable influence in making the succeeding eighteenth century, together with some exclusive factors belonging to this century, a golden period in the history of relationship between Hinduism and Islam. Most of the Mughal

sovereigns, and prior to them the monarchs of the Sultanate of Delhi, were prompted with the expediency of state-building and perpetuating it and their different policies of bringing the two communities nearer were inspired by this urge. But, despite this political aim and goal, their contribution in the process of cultural synthesis is praiseworthy and commendable.

The work begins with an account of the forming phase of this rapport between the seventh to the fourteenth centuries which also constitutes the background of this study. It shows that immediately following the demise of the Prophet Muhammad, attempts were made to rejuvenate age old Indo-Arab relations which were a part of the policy of all-around expansion of Islam. The Arab merchants and traders (now converted to Islam) began to settle down at the Malabar coast during the eighth century and with the active support and patronage of the local rulers, in particular the Zamorin of Calicut and the Rashtrakutas of Manyakhet, they were facilitated to purchase lands to dwell in and to build mosques and were allowed to openly profess their religion as is borne out by the Arab voyagers and geographers of the ninth and tenth centuries who have recorded the presence of Muslims in Malabar, Gujarat, Deccan, and even some parts of modern Uttar Pradesh. The Arab settlers married indigenous Hindu women and, thus, the process began of their being Indianised. Even before the beginning of the ninth century, the Muslims had spread over the whole of the western coast of India and they made their advent on the eastern coast of South India in the tenth century. In the twelfth century, the Muhammadans constructed a well-established community at the Coromandal coast and right up to the close of the fourteenth century, they constituted a significant proportion of the Indian society especially in the Punjab, Kashmir and Bengal chiefly through the means of conversion of the indigenous Hindu population, although the immigration of foreign settlers also contributed to this process but not as much compared to the former. Sufi saints began to arrive and settle down in India in the beginning of the eleventh



century. Their belief in three fundamental principles, viz. universal brotherhood, reflection of the attributes of God in one's own thought and activity, and the Unity of Divine revelation determined their attitude towards God, man and society and prepared the groundwork upon which a lofty edifice of peace and amity was constructed by them. Keeping in mind these basic postulates, the Sufis in general and the Chishtis in particular adopted certain practices, viz. intermingling freely with the Hindus and taking Hindu girls as wives, adoption of Indian way of living and emphasis on vegetarianism, use of Hindawi as a medium of literary expression, and taking up yogic practices as a means of self-elevation and purification which exhibit their broad-mindedness and humanism. By doing so, they came closer to the Hindu populace which resulted in the increasing acceptability of Sufism among the Indian masses and it also contributed in bridging the gap between the Hindus and the Muslims. In this respect, Sufis of other *silsilahs* namely the Suharawardis, the Qadiris and the Shattaris also made their contributions. Interaction between Hinduism and Islam through the *Bhakti* and Sufi movements and interchange of thoughts and practices of theirs constituted a common platform upon which followers of both the group of people could meet with ease. The state, with some exceptions, being largely a secular institution heeded not much attention towards conversion of non-believers within the fold of Islam and showed a sense of toleration to its non-Muslim subjects and didn't interfere with their religious matters in so far as they didn't pose any threat to its durability through rebellion or armed resistance, although, it didn't spare even the Muslim rebels on this ground. Under the pressure and need of circumstances, when the Hindus were admitted to the highest echelons of administration, the state became even less religious and more secular in its stance. Points of contact between the Hindu and the Muslim ruling classes improved after the disintegration of the Delhi Sultanate. In Bengal, Gujarat, and Kashmir and also in the Bahmani Kingdom, Hindus were appointed ministers and they continued

to operate the lower levels of administration. Marital alliances established between the reigning groups of the two were an indicator of the junction of their interests and greater social interaction. The Khaljis and the Tughlaqs had harmonious relations with the Jains and it proves that up to the beginning of the fifteenth century, a strong foundation of good relations among various religious groups had been established.

In the second chapter it is shown that during the fourteenth, fifteenth and even the subsequent centuries, a large number of *masnavis* in Hindi were produced by the Sufi poets using popular Hindu stories, legends and fables and combining them with Islamic mysticism. These poets who chose the Indian themes were impelled to do so because such themes offered a wide prospect to communicate their ideology on mysticism. Indian imagery and symbols were not only novel but were artistic also and this also contributed a lot in enhancing the admissibility of Sufism in the Indian mind.

The fifteenth-sixteenth centuries also witnessed the growth of popular monotheistic (*nirguna bhakti*) movements under Kabir, Nanak, Dadu Dayal and the like. Among these saints, Kabir was, no doubt, a towering personality who being a primal figure in the Indian religious system in the sense that although he borrowed from varied sources—Nath yogic ideology, Brahmanical Hinduism, Buddhist Tantrism and Islam (particularly Sufism) but he blended all these ideas in a way that it looked as if he not only summed up all that had gone before him in the field of devotion, but became virtually the starting point of a new trend of thinking, thereby, enlightened the path of Indian people and provided them a true leadership to a long time. Of all the monotheistic saints, Nanak was inspired the most by Islamic as well as Sufi ideology. He laid great emphasis on a strict ethical code. His teachings are marked by a practical approach towards the troubles of life. Like Kabir, he rejected asceticism and upheld living a normal life accompanied with piety and righteousness. Dadu Dayal, another monotheistic saint and an exact contemporary of Akbar, called

his path the path of *nipakh* or non-sectarianism. Elaborating it, Dadu asserted, like Kabir, that he was neither a Hindu nor a Mussalman, nor could he be confined to any of the sects, but absorbed himself only in God (*Rahman*). He also called his path of *nipakh* as *madhya marg*, the middle path. It implied loving devotion (*bhakti*) to God while leading a normal family life, as his predecessors Kabir and Nanak did. Underlying the fundamental equality of man, Dadu harshly criticised the orthodox elements of both the communities, Hindus and Muslims, like his forerunner Kabir. In putting forward the concept of society based on equality, both Nanak and Dadu accorded women an equal and honourable status among men.

From the sixteenth century onwards there was a remarkable resurgence of rural-based, more traditional popular *saguna bhakti* movements in the Indo-Gangetic plains for which various factors were responsible, an important one was Akbar himself. The revitalization of the self-confidence and prestige of the Brahmans who were the main supporters of this *saguna bhakti* movement was consequential to the liberal outlook of Akbar who entered into a dialogue with them in his *Ibadatkhanah* debates. Since they were on a peripheral position due to the popular monotheistic movements which criticized caste system, superiority of the Brahmans and infallibility of the scriptures, they supported the *saguna bhakti* movement and, thus, gave themselves again a centralised position in the Hindu society. Also, crucial was the philosophical impact of the Vaishnavite teachers of South India—Ramanuja, Madhva, Nimbarka, and most importantly of Vallabhacharya who all fiercely opposed the non-dualistic (*advaita*) philosophy of Shankaracharya and advocated loving devotion (*bhakti*) to an incarnated Vishnu having form (*sakara*) and attributes (*saguna*). Last but not least, the Sufi saints and poets, by their ceaseless insistence on the path of love, prepared the base for the growth of this mass Vaishnavite movement. This movement had two forms: one, dedicated to the worship of Lord Krishna and the second was the movement committed to the veneration of Lord Rama. The

chief interpreter of this latter school of *bhakti* was Tulsidas, a contemporary of Mughal Emperor Akbar. Tulsi laid great emphasis on the need for social and political stability, only within this framework one can properly perform his religious duties, thereby, validated the Mughal Empire and, thus, prepared the ground for wider collaboration with it. In turn, this was responded by the Mughal state which gave land grants to the foremost hubs of *bhakti* situated at Mathura, Vrindavan, and so on. With the passage of time, non-conformist and humanistic aspects of Tulsi's teachings had been forgotten by his Brahman successors and he became a bulwark of conservatism with emphasis been given to his traditional and ritualistic aspects. The cult of the worship of Krishna attracted Muslim poets too, e.g. Raskhan and Abd ur-Rahim Khan-i-Khanan etc. who composed devotional poems to the love of Radha and Krishna. It is a remarkable thing which is somewhat missing in the Rama cult where we find no Muslim poet praising him.

The foremost social contribution of the saints of *bhakti* was the perception of tolerance, humanism and religious equanimity. These and various other foreign ideological influences together with the hereditary traits were at work in shaping up the grand design of secular state by Akbar. Owing to his egalitarian outlook, Akbar tried to establish the Mughal Empire first as a multi-religious entity and after 1579, as a supra-religious state. He not only broadened the social base of the Mughal state by incorporating within its fold the majority Hindu section but firmly rooted it also into the Indian soil by refining and institutionalising various measures adopted by the earlier kings, e.g. formation of a composite aristocracy and establishing matrimonial alliance with the powerful indigenous ruling class. The state was required to be supra-religious so that the administrative mechanism made from this mixed nobility could function efficiently. By providing a supra-religious identity to the state, Akbar also aspired to enhance the acceptability of the Mughal Empire to a large section of Indian people; he wanted to make feel the Hindus as well as the

Shiites that the Mughal state is theirs also, it is not an exclusive monopoly of a particular section. Akbar also evolved a political device—the *Tauhid i-Ilahi* or *Din Ilahi* and in doing so, ensured the exclusive allegiance of the nobility to the Emperor and, thereby, tried to bind them to the Mughal throne. And, this certainly enhanced the durability and longevity of the Mughal Empire. However, the idea of the state being supra-religious or secular in modern sense, made the *ulema* very angry because it greatly reduced their prestige and influence.

The work then turns towards the third chapter demonstrating the survival of the notion of secular statecraft with slight variations during the first half of the seventeenth century under Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Jahangir followed the same line of Akbar but offered least challenges to the clerics as compared to his father. He also persistently emphasised on justice and benevolent nature of the state to counter his despotism. What Shah Jahan really did that he presented a compromise between the *Shariat* and practical administration, thus, while officially declaring the state to be an Islamic one, showing reverence to the *Shariat*, and observing in his personal life its injunctions, he adjusted his government according to the needs of the hour, i.e. he didn't reject any of the liberal measures set up by Akbar. In this respect the growing influence of the crown prince Dara Shikoh and his literary renderings also played its part in making the emperor tolerant. Dara's works showed the philosophical similarity found between Hinduism and Islam. His works, in particular the *Majma ul-Bahrain* (Commingle of the Two Oceans) and the *Sirr i-Akbar* (the Great Secret) show the compatibility of Hinduism and Islam and the divine origin of Hinduism and for him, whatever were the differences between these two religions were only verbal and outward. In war of succession, Dara lost his battle to his shrewder and militarily more capable younger brother Aurangzeb and, thus, became a political martyr. The battle between them was not a clash of Hinduism and Islam or of liberalism and

conservatism or of the forces of progression and regression but it was a war to gain authority in which various sections of the nobility chose their sides according to their convenience and allegiance. But, in it Aurangzeb was bound to become victorious for his being a competent commander. It can also be said that the adjustment made by Shah Jahan proved to be a precursor to the reign of Aurangzeb since by granting the fundamentally Islamic character of the state even in theory, no excuse was left to establish it on a strict implementation of the *Shariat*.

In the fourth chapter various factors and compulsions have been discussed which forced Aurangzeb to take recourse to the slogan of Islamic character of the state and taming the *ulema* to try to avert different crisis which he faced at various times. Until 1687, the Mughal state headed by him was by and large an orthodox type of state in which *ulema* had enjoyed too much importance—but not to the extent of formulating state policies. This phase is marked by a number of instances of temple-destruction and the discriminatory policy followed towards people professing other religions especially Hinduism, which reached its zenith with the re-imposition of *Jizyah* in 1679. Although, all the examples of desecration of temples were politically-motivated and were not any religious act and also were the following of an old tradition started about sixth century A.D. onwards. Neither the re-imposition of *Jizyah* nor its remission in the Deccan in 1704 was religiously-motivated, both of them were motivated by purely political purposes as Aurangzeb's other so-called puritanical moves were themselves in nature; *Jizyah* was re-enforced to rally the Muslim opinion behind the Emperor in his struggle with the Deccani states and the Marathas and likewise it was cut back due to serious efforts on Aurangzeb's part to reach a settlement with the Marathas. Despite excessive emphasis on Islam, the broad features of the Mughal state as Akbar provided it remained very much the same even in this time. In this respect, the later part of Aurangzeb's reign from 1687 to 1707 deserves special attention for it was the

period of the realisation of political pragmatism and casting away of religious idealism of the Emperor. During this phase, Aurangzeb talks about justice, proper discharge of the duties of sovereignty, attention to the necessary worldly tasks as being truly religious and the protection of the subject as the source of happiness in this world and hereafter and *not* about waging holy wars against the infidels, defending the faith and punishing the non-religious. By doing so, Aurangzeb was trying to come close to the notion of secular state as was built up by Akbar and was retained by his son and grandson. This attitude together with Aurangzeb's other prudent moves, largely gave way to make the eighteenth century the age of liberalism and cultural syncretism.

In the chapter five it is shown that the state remained the promoter of amicable relationship among various religious persuasions during the eighteenth century despite the tendency of decay and degeneration in the political sphere, albeit there were other significant factors exclusively related to the eighteenth century, e.g. springing up of a large number of Hindu sages and preachers from the lower strata of society and joining of their faith by the Muslims even belonging to the respectable families, greatest contribution to Persian language and literature made by Hindu scholars, and evolution of a distinctive outlook of esteem and equivalence towards Hinduism by the Muslims, that played a far more critical role in fostering harmonious relationship between Islam and Hinduism and making the eighteenth century as the climax of socio-religious fusion. The continuation of the practice of awarding grants to the Hindu recluses by the Muslim ruling class and *vice versa* also exhibits the extent of mutual goodwill prevailed between the two communities during this period. The rejuvenation of the Chishti *silsilah* during the eighteenth century also boosted up amicable relationship between these two groups of people.

The last and sixth chapter of the present study deals with the extent of reciprocal socio-cultural effects which Hinduism and Islam exerted upon each

other during the course of their coexistence of ten long centuries in India, especially in the areas of food and drink, dressing, social etiquettes and mannerisms. Both the communities deeply influenced each other in these fields although the influence of Hinduism on Islam in this respect seems to be more profound. In the social sphere, the evolution of Muslim 'caste' system was a novel thing, although, there were, no doubt, informal divisions in Islam prior to its coming in India; what really happened here that these informal divisions fit right into the grooves of the prevailing caste system and became regular and, thus, assumed the status of castes, although this division was not altogether inflexible as we find references of upward social mobility. The customs and rituals followed by the Muslims right from child-birth up to the wedding ceremony and even various customs regarding the dead significantly demonstrate the influence of Hinduism on Islam. Belief in various superstitions and astrology, belief in the efficacy of amulets to ward off evil spirits, faith in witchcraft and enchantments by the Muslims are some other examples of Hindu influence. However, commemoration of Hindu festivals by the Muslims and *vice versa* is a remarkable feature of the socio-cultural life of medieval period, which shows the extent of amity, goodwill and harmony prevailed between the two communities. Cultural fusion through religious institutions could also become possible by participation of men and women adhering to different faiths in the *urs* ceremonies and various other religious festivals with pious zeal. Here again we find no distinction of caste and creed and all participated with passion and enthusiasm in it. Thus, barring certain religious practices, differences in socio-cultural outlook and procedures between the Hindus and the Muslims were quite indiscernible until the eighteenth century. Religious syncretism together with social similitude during the eighteenth century encouraged the spirit of integration in national life.

Besides indicating the points of similarity and resemblance between Hinduism and Islam during the medieval period, the significance of the present



study lies in the need of interpreting our past keeping in view of the needs of the present. The requirement to understand the real nature of mutual relations between the Hindus and the Muslims during the medieval period is vitally associated with the growth of the composite India in modern times. During the course of nation-building through the efforts of evolving a composite national culture, it's useless to try to overemphasise that the relations between the two most important communities of India were not enjoyable and cordial enough during the medieval period, at the same time, the assertions put forward by the orthodox and regressive elements from both the communities that the present-day state of affairs (i.e. the so called bitter and dubious relations between them) is only a continuance of the 'situation of the past' is also futile. The purposeful academic exertions aimed at the sole portrayal of the grim situation between the Hindus and the Muslims during the medieval period also bring them under serious doubts for their interpretation of the past is both partial and unilateral. There were undoubtedly rift and bitterness between the Hindus and the Muslims at the initial stage, particularly during and after the plundering raids of Mahmud of Ghazni, but with the passage of time, the situation didn't remain the same. It was not possible for them to remain in perpetual hostility and gradually they learned to tolerate each other. Since the Muslims lived surrounded by an overwhelmingly Hindu populace and they also formed the bulk of their population by the conversion of native Hindu people, it made the process of mutual assimilation and interaction of thought and culture inevitable. By the eighteenth century, there existed a balance between the two major communities of India which was due to religious syncretism together with their similitude in socio-cultural outlook. Although, it will be unfair to expect a complete fusion or an absolute unity between the two communities since it could neither be achieved nor was it desirable for it hinders the further prospect of progress and development in civilisation.

Unfortunately, this equilibrium couldn't remain the same during the British rule which, for the sake of its perpetuation, adopted such measures especially the Roman policy of *divide et impera*. To achieve the objectives of this policy, different types of dissemblance and differences have been created between the Hindus and the Muslims and the insignificant differences between them were purposefully widened up to the extent of irreconciliation, especially following the great revolt of 1857, the last masterpiece of Hindu-Muslim unity, which qualitatively changed the internal dynamics of their relationship. Communalism which was an inevitable consequence of adoption of such type of policies, also over-emphasised and validated such differences. But, it lies beyond the scope of the present study.

As far as limitations of this work is concerned, there is a dearth of sufficient data and facts to understand and analyze the conditions of the common people, which makes it difficult to gauge the extent of relationship prevailed amongst different communities at the grass root level. Contemporary historical works didn't pay attention towards the 'hut' but rather towards the 'palace.' So it becomes rather problematical to see the social life of common populace of that period in a right and holistic way due to a serious shortcoming of medieval Indian historiography. Because of this compulsion, we were forced to take recourse to the political history and to the personality and oeuvre of the emperors.

Keeping in view the limits of the present study, there are immense possibilities of further research on this topic. It is hoped that by applying interdisciplinary approach and incorporating the tools and techniques of Anthropology, Archaeology and Sociology, one might succeed in reconstructing, to a fairly considerable extent, the pattern of liaison that existed amongst the commoners in the distant past.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **0.1 FRAMING THE TOPIC**

The present study is intended to understand the pattern of relationship amongst the various communities, especially between the Hindus and the Muslims, during the Mughal period and to emphasize the "tendencies towards religious and social synthesis and linguistic assimilation which could not but pave the way for the evolution of a homogenous nation."<sup>1</sup> The forming phase of this rapport between the seventh to the fourteenth centuries and inter-religious relationship between Islam and other minor religious sects, e.g. Jainism and Sikhism etc. have also been taken into consideration. The research is focussed mainly on northern India, i.e. the Indo-Gangetic basin which was the heartland of the Mughal Empire and remained in its possession for the longest; references of Deccan and South India are there but not in abundance. The timeline is roughly from the fifteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries, although as has been stated, to show the background of the process of assimilation, the time-span from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries has also been considered. The fifteenth century, though, saw the disintegration of the Sultanate of Delhi but it also witnessed such developments, e.g. growth of popular monotheistic movements under Kabir and Nanak, which positively moulded the course of time and provided a sound foundation upon which a magnificent edifice of secular state was built by Akbar in the following century. From the latter half of the eighteenth century, the conquest of India began by the British East India Company and this gave birth to new processes, e.g. colonisation of society and economy and bringing India under the British dominance in the following century. India's subjugation to a foreign imperialist power, one of the most potent of its time and establishment of an unequal connection between them

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<sup>1</sup> A. Rashid, *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 236.

and bringing her interests under Britain were new trends, hitherto absent in the Indian history and this serves as a watershed to the present study. To consolidate its control over India especially following the great revolt of 1857, the British Raj adopted various dividing policies which affected various communities differently and also qualitatively changed the dynamics of their relations, but it is outside the scope of the present study. Although an important aspect of the British rule—rise and growth of communalism and especially the efforts of communalisation of medieval Indian history—are of considerable importance to be discussed further.

## 0.2 PREVIOUS CONTRIBUTIONS AND THEIR INADEQUACY

This attempt is by no means a novel one and there is neither the intention nor the ability to such a lofty claim. The problem to understand, to analyze and to interpret the nature of relationship between the two largest communities in India, i.e. Hinduism and Islam “has baffled many a great scholar, defied many a great attempt at correct interpretation and eluded the grasp of many a thinker.”<sup>2</sup> The scholars who directly touched upon this theme are Prof. Muhammad Habib, Prof. K.A. Nizami, Dr. A. Rashid, Prof. S.M. Ikram, Prof. Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, Dr. R.C. Majumdar, Prof. K.S. Lal, Dr. A.L. Srivastava, Dr. L.P. Sharma and Dr. Peter Jackson, besides a host of other scholars who have dealt one or other aspect of this problem. With the hesitant, some limitations of these works which can be pointed out are:

- a) Most of them are not comprehensive, i.e. they deal the topic in a sketchy manner.
- b) Also, they are confined especially to the Sultanate period; no such work has been made related to the Mughal period.

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<sup>2</sup> K.N. Chitnis, *Socio-Economic History of Medieval India*, New Delhi, 2009, p. 386.

- c) They are limited to a particular region; no work at the national level or at least in the context of northern India has been rendered.
- d) They are also influenced by a specific ideology which sees the Hindus and the Muslims under perpetual conflict during the entire medieval period.

### **0.3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND PLAN OF STUDY**

The present study has been done from a different perspective. The theoretical framework adopted here is the assumption that the state, headed by the Emperors, formed the strongest arm of relationship amongst the various communities which definitely played his part in order to shape it up besides a profound assimilating contribution made by the Sufi saints and the *Bhaktas*. The Mughal state, headed by its tolerant despots produced a conducive environment in bringing Hinduism and Islam even closer during the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries—a process which had already started but was unsupplied with appropriate institutional support. Most of the Mughal sovereigns were prompted with the expediency of state-building and perpetuating it and their different policies of bringing the two communities nearer were inspired by this urge. But, despite this political aim and goal, their contribution in the process of cultural synthesis is praiseworthy and commendable. Aurangzeb was, no doubt, an exception in the process with a distinctive and rigid outlook but, as has been shown, the later part of his reign is influenced by a sense of political pragmatism which exerted a considerable influence in making the succeeding eighteenth century a golden period in the history of relationship between Hinduism and Islam, besides due to other various factors exclusively related to the eighteenth century, discussed in the following pages, amidst decline in the political authority and prevailing anarchy.

The references of intolerance and bigotry are of course found throughout the course of Indian history and the medieval period is certainly not an exception. But two things should be taken into consideration. First, there was no such policy of intolerance which was directed against the Hindus in general.<sup>3</sup> Second, all the examples of temple-desecration, forced conversion or imposing and re-imposing the *Jizyah* were politically motivated, have been taken either to strike political interests or to ensure the safety of the empire and, thus, from the Islamic point of view can't be justified although medieval chroniclers invariably took recourse to Islam to provide legitimacy to such malfunctions. So delinking of religion from politics is a must to see and analyse the things in a right perspective.

Keeping in view the points mentioned above, the present study is divided into six chapters. Chapter I is - *The Formative Phase: Seventh to Fifteenth Centuries*. It is a survey of Hindu-Muslim relations right from the advent of Islam in India up to the disintegration of the Delhi Sultanate which also constitutes the background of the study. It shows that Islam was introduced in the South India during the eighth century by the Arab traders who by doing so rejuvenated their old commercial links with India, and the growth of the Muslim population, whose result was that up to the fifteenth century the Muslims formed a significant proportion of the Indian society especially in the Punjab, Kashmir and Bengal chiefly through the means of conversion of the indigenous Hindu population, although the immigration of foreign settlers also contributed to this process but not as much compared with the former. The state during the Sultanate period, with some exceptions, being to some extent a secular institution heeded very little attention towards conversion of non-believers within the fold of Islam and showed a sense of toleration to its non-

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<sup>3</sup> "The supposed cases of persecution in medieval India can be counted on the fingers of one hand and will, on closer examination, turn out to be cases of individual injustice, not of communal oppression; contemporaries, at least, did not regard them as such." M. Habib, *Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period*, vol. I, ed., K.A. Nizami, New Delhi, 1974, p. 19.

Muslim subjects and didn't interfere with their religious matters so far they didn't pose any threat to its durability through rebellion or armed resistance. Because of the need of the hour, when the Hindus were admitted to the highest echelons of administration, it became even less religious and more secular in its attitude. Advent of Muslim saints in India and their being settling here even prior to the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi and their profound contribution made to bring peace and amity between the Hindus and the Muslims by their firm belief in three basic principles, to be elucidated later, is of singular importance. The lead was taken by the Chishtis in this respect, besides the Suharawardis, the Qadiris and the Shattaris also made their contributions. Interaction of Sufism and Bhakti Movement also made a common platform on which the followers of both the communities could meet with ease. Points of contact between the Hindu and Muslim ruling classes improved after the disintegration of the Delhi Sultanate. In Bengal, Gujarat, and Kashmir and also in the Bahmani Kingdom, Hindus were appointed ministers and they continued to operate the lower levels of administration. Marital alliances between the two at the Royal families were an indicator of the junction of their interests and greater social interaction. The Khaljis and the Tughlaqs had harmonious relations with the Jain community and it proves that up to the beginning of fifteenth century, a strong foundation of good relations among various religious groups had been established.

Chapter II is *The Revolutionary Fifteen-Sixteen Centuries: Popular Forms of Sufism and Bhakti Movement and the Age of Akbar* which discusses the production of a large number of *masnavis* by the Sufi poets, growth of popular monotheistic and *saguna Bhakti* movements and the era of Akbar. These *masnavis* written in Hindi during the fourteenth, fifteenth and even the subsequent centuries enhanced the admissibility of Sufism in the Indian mind. The resurgence of *saguna Bhakti* movements especially the Rama cult under Tulsidas validated the Mughal Empire and, thus, prepared the ground for wider collaboration with

the Mughal state. In turn, this was responded by the Mughal state which gave land grants to the foremost hubs of *bhakti* situated at Mathura, Vrindavan, and so on. The Krishna cult attracted Muslim poets too, e.g. Raskhan and Abd ur-Rahim Khan-i-Khanan who composed devotional poems to the love of Radha and Krishna. It is a remarkable thing which is somewhat missing in the Rama cult where we find no Muslim poet praising the Lord Rama. The fifteenth-sixteenth centuries also witnessed the growth of popular monotheistic movements under Kabir, Nanak and Dadu Dayal whose foremost social contribution was the perception of tolerance, humanism and religious equanimity. These and various other foreign ideological influences were at work in shaping up the grand design of secular state by Akbar, who not only broadened the social base of the Mughal state by incorporating within its fold the majority Hindu section but firmly rooted it also into the Indian soil by refining various measures adopted by the earlier kings, e.g. formation of a composite aristocracy and establishing matrimonial alliance with the powerful indigenous ruling class. In the beginning, Akbar tried to develop the state as a multi-religious empire and later he gave it the shape of a supra-religious entity. The idea of the state being supra-religious or secular in modern sense, however, made the *ulema* very angry because it greatly reduced their powers and influence. This attitude best finds its representation in the writings of Abdul Qadir Badauni, our chief source of information on the religious experiments made by Akbar.

Chapter III has the title - *First Half of the Seventeenth Century: Continuation of the Policies of Akbar* which demonstrates the continued existence of the notion of secular statecraft with slight variations under Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Jahangir followed the same line of Akbar but offered least challenges to the clerics as compared to his father. He also persistently insisted on justice and benevolent nature of the state to counter his despotism. What Shah Jahan really did that he presented a compromise between the *Shariat* and practical



administration, thus, while officially declaring the state to be an Islamic one, showing reverence to the *Shariat*, and observing in his personal life its injunctions, he adjusted his government according to the needs of the hour, i.e. he didn't reject any of the liberal measures set up by Akbar. In this respect the growing influence of the crown prince Dara Shikoh and his works also played its part in making the emperor tolerant.

Chapter IV is *The Reign of Aurangzeb: The Period of Interlude* which discusses various factors and compulsions which forced Aurangzeb to take recourse to the slogan of Islamic character of the state and taming the *ulema* to avert different crisis which he faced at various times. Until 1687, the Mughal state headed by Aurangzeb was by and large an orthodox type of state in which *ulema* had enjoyed too much importance—but not to the extent of formulating state policies. This phase is marked by a number of instances of temple-desecration and the discriminatory policy followed towards people professing other religions especially Hinduism, which reached its zenith with the re-imposition of *Jizyah* in 1679. Although, all the examples of desecration of temples were politically-motivated and not were any kind of religious act and were the following of an old tradition started about sixth century A.D. onwards. Neither the re-imposition of *Jizyah* nor its remission in the Deccan in 1704 was religiously-motivated; both of them were motivated by purely political purposes as Aurangzeb's other so-called puritanical moves were themselves in nature. Despite excessive emphasis on Islam, the broad features of the Mughal state remained very much the same as Akbar provided it even during this time. In this respect the later part of Aurangzeb's reign deserves special attention for it was the period of the realisation of political pragmatism and casting away of religious idealism of the emperor. During this phase Aurangzeb talks about justice, proper discharge of the duties of sovereignty, attention to the necessary worldly tasks as being truly religious and the protection of the subjects as the source of happiness in this world and hereafter and by doing so, he was trying

to come close to the notion of secular state as was built up by Akbar and was retained by his son and grandson. This attitude largely gave way to make the eighteenth century the age of liberalism and cultural syncretism.

Chapter V is *First Half of the Eighteenth Century: The Heyday of Cultural Fusion* in which it is shown that the state remained the promoter of amicable relationship among various religious persuasions during the eighteenth century despite the tendency of political decay, though there were other significant factors exclusively related to the eighteenth century, e.g. springing up of a large number of Hindu sages and preachers from the lower strata of society, greatest contribution to Persian language and literature made by Hindu scholars, and evolution of a distinctive outlook of equivalence towards Hinduism by the Muslims, that played a far more critical role in fostering harmonious relationship between Islam and Hinduism. Religious syncretism together with social similitude during the eighteenth century encouraged the spirit of integration in national life.

The sixth and last chapter is *The Socio-Cultural Milieu* which tries to show the extent of reciprocal effects which Hinduism and Islam exerted upon each other during their thousand years coexistence in India, especially in the areas of food and drink, dressing, social etiquettes and mannerisms. In the social sphere, the evolution of Muslim 'caste' system was a novel thing showing Hindu influence, besides the customs and rituals followed by the Muslims right from child-birth up to the wedding ceremony and even various customs regarding the dead significantly demonstrate the influence of Hinduism on Islam in India. Belief in various superstitions and astrology, belief in the efficacy of amulets to ward off evil spirits, faith in witchcraft and enchantments by the Muslims are some other examples of Hindu influence. However, commemoration of Hindu festivals by the Muslims and vice versa is a remarkable feature of the socio-cultural life of medieval period, which shows the extent of amity, goodwill and harmony prevailed between the two communities. Cultural fusion through

religious institutions could also become possible by participation of men and women adhering to different faiths in the *urs* ceremonies and various other religious festivals with pious zeal. Here again there was no distinction of caste and creed.

In the present study, during the course of showing the configuration of relationship between India's two most prominent communities, the Muslims have *not* been considered as a separate socio-cultural entity but as an Indianised one, since the process of their Indianisation had soon started following their settling in the country. During their long habitation in India and constituting their majority through conversion from the Hindus, Muslims also learnt that were the characteristic features of Hinduism, i.e. caste system and a peculiar cultural outlook inclined towards Hinduism. Prof. M. Habib aptly writes in this respect, "The mass of the Mussalmans being converts from Hinduism, forsook the temple for the mosque but never thought of changing their traditional customs; the prevalence of the ancient customs of Aryavarta among the Indian Mussalmans today is a notorious and undeniable fact."<sup>4</sup>

#### 0.4 CERTAIN ELUCIDATIONS

This highly-debatable topic of the social history of medieval India is rather difficult to be assessed in a right perspective. The sources dealing the question of Hindu-Muslim relations are so varied, so complex, so multifarious that "with a little twisting of the evidence different conclusions could be drawn."<sup>5</sup> This "twisting of the evidence" is obviously inspired by the historian's own perception and philosophy. "While India was in slavery, the views of the British administrative historians dominated the field. Though nationalist historians attempted to break away from the British point of view, it can be

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<sup>4</sup> M. Habib, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> K.N. Chitnis, op. cit., p. 386.

demonstrated that many of their intellectual categories were based on British thinking... It was this view of history which portrayed the Hindus and Muslims as being divided into two warring camps with little in common between them, thus paving the way for the emergence of the two-nation theory.”<sup>6</sup> So, according to the mindset of the historian and his mode of selection of the facts, different views have been articulated about the problem of relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims which can be broadly categorized into two diametrically opposite views expressed by two schools of thought.<sup>7</sup> The first is which can conveniently be said ‘*Tara Chand-A. Rashid school of thought*’ and which talks about the process of fusion of the twin cultures in India. It reiterates that out of the commingling of the two communities, not only a common culture but even an integrated nation grew up. Dr. Tara Chand, the chief exponent of the theory of fusion of Hindu-Muslim cultures, expresses his viewpoint thus, “The Muslims who came into India made it their home. They lived surrounded by the Hindu people and a state of perennial hostility with them was impossible. Mutual intercourse led to mutual understanding. Many who had changed their faith differed little from those whom they left. Thus, after the first shock of conquest was over, Hindus and Muslims preferred to find a *via media* whereby to live as neighbours. The effort to seek a new life led to the development of a new culture which was neither exclusively Hindu nor purely Muslim. It was indeed a Muslim-Hindu culture.” He goes on to say, “Not only did Hindu religion, Hindu art, Hindu literature and Hindu science absorb Muslim elements, but the very spirit of Hindu culture and the very stuff of Hindu mind were also altered, and the Muslim reciprocated by responding to the change in every department of life.”<sup>8</sup> The second is ‘*R.C. Majumdar-I.H. Qureshi school of thought*’ pointing the utter incompatibility of the Hindu and Muslim cultures. R.C. Majumdar puts forward the view of this school as

<sup>6</sup> Satish Chandra, *Historiography, Religion and State in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 1997, p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Here I am partly modifying the views articulated by K.N. Chitnis, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Allahabad, n.d., p. 111.

follows: Whatever reciprocal influences were there between the Hindus and the Muslims in dress, food, language, music, art and architecture etc. "touched merely the fringe and external elements of life... It is noteworthy, that neither the Hindus nor the Muslims imbibed, even to the least degree, the chief characteristic features of the other's culture which may be regarded as their greatest contribution to human civilization," i.e. the liberal spirit of toleration of the Hindus and the ultra-democratic social ideas of the Muslims. Majumdar continues: "There was no *rapprochement* in respect of popular or national traditions, and those social and religious ideas, beliefs, practices, and institutions which touch the deeper chord of life... In short, the reciprocal influences were too superficial in character to affect materially the fundamental differences between the two communities in respect of almost everything that is deep-seated in human nature and makes life worth living. So the two great communities, although they lived side by side, moved each in its own orbit, and there was as yet no sign that the 'twain shall ever meet.'"<sup>9</sup> Similarly, emphasizing the foreign and therefore separate socio-racial identity of the Muslims by following almost the same line of argument, historians like I.H. Qureshi<sup>10</sup> who are known for the sympathetic positive attitude towards the Muslim rulers and the Muslim rule, firmly hold that though the Hindus and the Muslims came close to each other in certain spheres, union was impossible,<sup>11</sup> thereby seeking a justification for the Pakistan movement. The truth seems to lie somewhere in between these extremes as both of them are beside the mark. The first view is an overstatement and the second, an understatement, though, the present study has got inspiration to a great extent from the former. There was neither a complete fusion directing to the formation of a 'Muslim-Hindu culture' nor a total breakdown in bringing about a *rapprochement* between the

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<sup>9</sup> R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Delhi Sultanate*, Bombay, 1967, pp. 616-17.

<sup>10</sup> Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent (610-1947)*, rep., Delhi, 1985, pp. 82-87.

<sup>11</sup> Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in Medieval Bengal*, Delhi, 1985, p. 6.

two communities. "The process of amalgamation and fusion had already started and had even made long strides by the end of the eighteenth century, preparing the ground for the quick rise of a synthetic Hindu-Muslim culture under right conditions."<sup>12</sup>

During the medieval period, it can't be denied, that religion was a major source of inspiration even in the secular intellectual persuasions, and history-writing during that period was affected by it, for most of the contemporary historiographers were the product of the *madrasah* system of education, were attached to the management of the religious endowments under the state, or were associated with the department of justice which functioned according to the *Shariat*. It was but natural that such a person had a specific approach for the historiography<sup>13</sup> and it is not surprising that some historians of medieval India had visualised contemporary history as the history of Muslim rule in India.<sup>14</sup> And it contained "an implicit communal undertone" in such type of explanations since "if the ruler's disposition, his personal qualities mattered all that much in the making of history, surely the fact that he was a Muslim ruling over a vast mass of Hindus would be a material factor in the whole assessment of history."<sup>15</sup>

Historians during the medieval period in India understood historical causation in terms of human free will or, at best, human nature or disposition.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> K.N. Chitnis, op. cit., pp. 387-88.

<sup>13</sup> "Clerics as those (medieval Indian) historians were, their (Medieval European historians') whole outlook on life and letters was influenced by the theological doctrine in which all that happened in the past and the present and was to happen in the future was predetermined by god's will; which in turn implied that the events of the past, the present and the future formed a tightly knit whole as the manifestation of god's wisdom, for surely no event could occur at random unless it had been assigned its due place in god's all-embracing plan. But such was *not* the understanding of medieval India's courtier-historians, even when some of them happened to be theologians along with being courtiers and historians." Harbans Mukhia, 'Communalism and the Writing of Medieval Indian History: A Reappraisal', in *Perspectives on Medieval History*, New Delhi, 1993, p. 35.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36. See *idem*, p. 43, n. 9 for details.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> "Their (medieval Indian historians') experience was that rebellions occurred when so-and-so had, of his will decided to rebel; that a king was deposed when a group of nobles decided among themselves to terminate his reign; that an emperor engaged himself in extensive conquests owing to his virile nature; that another emperor followed a policy of treating all his subjects alike, irrespective of the distinctions

There was also an element of ambivalence in the medieval historiography "that accommodated... a quite astonishingly secular historical thinking such as Abul Fazl's along with a fairly dogmatic Muslim element such as Mulla Abdul Qadir Badauni's. Indeed the whole range of historical works written in medieval India swings in degrees from one to the other thinking, yet never overflowing the human will/nature syndrome."<sup>17</sup>

This was the ambivalent structure of history-writing with an unspoken communal tinge that the British imperialist historians had taken over from medieval India. "It was, however, the singular mark of colonial historiography that it sought to eliminate the element of ambivalence from this framework, boldly explicate its latent communal undertone, and make a linear communal study of India's past the dominant, almost the exclusive, trend."<sup>18</sup> Its end product was James Mill's periodisation of Indian history into Hindu, Muslim and British periods, thus, unduly and unjustly assigning the importance to religion during the ancient and medieval periods—it was quite astonishing why he didn't denominate the British period as Christian period? Mill's periodisation "was to become the universally accepted periodisation for the study of Indian history for the next century and a half and continues to be nearly universally accepted in Indian Universities today though with a new nomenclature: ancient, medieval and modern periods."<sup>19</sup> An even bolder and more deliberate attempt in the direction of British colonial historiography was made by Elliot and Dowson's eight-volume *The History of India as told by its own Historians*. It was a translation of excerpts from historical works of medieval India. "The selection of excerpts left little to the reader's imagination: invariably the translated passages aroused communal passions. Apparently, Elliot knew

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of creed, for so enlightened was his disposition. Willful decision, conditioned by the nature of each human being involved in the events with which the historians were concerned, formed the basic cause of the occurrence of those events, as our historians saw it." Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

what he was doing, for the professed purpose of all his intellectual labour was 'to teach the bombastic *Babus* of India the virtues of good government they were enjoying' under the British rule compared to the misery of their fate when the Muslims governed them. If Elliot succeeded eminently in achieving his objective of inflaming passions, it was largely because he had adopted a long familiar, durable framework but had drastically changed its emphasis."<sup>20</sup>

This revised framework, unfortunately, sustained during the twentieth century. Communal historiography, reflecting the communal wing of the Indian national movement, followed the same framework mentioned above. "Hindu communalism visualised the medieval centuries as a long period of alien Muslim dominance over the Hindus (the vast masses or the country's native people), the repeated attempts by the Muslim rulers to convert the Hindus to Islam or else to eliminate them and the heroic stubbornness of the Hindus in defence of their religion and the country's honour. Other stereotypes were also created: if the Hindus lost their battles to the Muslims, this was because of mutual dissensions; if medieval Indian history was a story of unrelenting conflict between the two major communities, this was owing to the Muslims' determination to retain and assert their separate identity unlike their predecessors, the Greeks, the Sakas, the Huns etc., who also had emigrated from distant alien lands, but having once settled had lost their independent identity in the mainstream of Indian (i.e. Hindu) life; Indian (i.e. Hindu) civilisation has always been known for its liberalism in embracing any element that comes to it with outstretched, friendly arms; it is the Muslims who refused to merge their separate identity in the mainstream of Indian (i.e. Hindu) life; indeed they sought to forcibly change the course of this stream. This was the origin of communalism in India, etc."<sup>21</sup> Outwardly it appears a fairly good statement but under it lies a methodological fault. "The flaw rests on making a

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 37-38.



comparison between two incomparable phenomena. While the Greeks, Huns etc. have been identified on the secular basis of the country of their origin or of their race, Muslims have been given their identity in terms of their religion. Clearly, the two bases of identification are far from identical, and the comparison thereof is questionable. If, however, identical bases of identification for all of them were adopted, the problem would be posed as follows: the Greeks, the Huns, the Sakas, the Scythians etc. came to India and over time lost their identity in the mainstream of Indian life: what about the Mamluks, the Khaljis, the Tughlaqs and even the Mughals? Have they retained their separate identity to this day, or has it been merged in the mainstream of Indian life? Evidently, the answer is quite unambiguous, for there is hardly anyone around to claim descent from all those dynasties that had migrated to India in the medieval age and had ruled here for so many centuries. Where have the descendants of all those dynasties and their nobles gone? Surely they have merged their identity, like their predecessor-immigrants, in the mainstream of Indian life and enriched it in the process... the whole argument in this unequal comparison is communal; not only does it identify Muslims on the basis of their religion, it also quietly identifies Indian mainstream with Hindu mainstream. The argument is thus posed in veiled communal categories."<sup>22</sup> Muslim communal historiographers, on the other hand, regarded as those reigns which excessively asserted their Islamic identity as the pinnacles of Islamic glory. The basic postulation of both Hindu and Muslim communal historiography (as also the British imperialist historiography) comprised the unanimity of their thought: "they all visualised the Hindus and the Muslims in medieval India perpetually in conflict, deriving their evidence from the arena of political, indeed dynastic, history."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44, n. 13.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

The nationalist historians challenged the notion of perpetual communal conflict between Hindus and Muslims in medieval India put forward by communal historians by questioning the soundness of the religious motivation of Muslim rulers of medieval India; by producing facts to suggest communal harmony in medieval India; by emphasising the significant extent of mutual interaction between the two large communities "in the realm of ideas, in the realm of culture, in the realm of life-styles in the centuries past" thus, helped in evolving the concept of 'composite culture' from this emphasis and contributed in secularising the study of medieval Indian history.<sup>24</sup> It was their extremely significant service to the discipline of history by any standard. Their chief shortcoming, as suggested by Prof. Harbans Mukhia, was that "they were contesting communal historiography... on the latter's terms" by studying primarily politico-administrative history and drawing their data by and large from court chronicles. "If communal historians overemphasised one part of evidence and covered up another, nationalist historians did much the same, though with a contrary, and admittedly more laudable, objective."<sup>25</sup> The nationalist historians also assumed the existence of separate communal identities of Hindus and Muslims like the communal historiographers and this was their another methodological flaw.<sup>26</sup>

But, despite the shift of focus from emphasis on politico-administrative to socio-economic history by research on new topics during the late 1950's "in which communal categories did not enter at all", e.g. "rural class structure, forms and magnitude of exploitation of medieval Indian peasantry, the significance of *zamindars* as a class, production technology, trade and

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 38-39.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>26</sup> "... even in nationalist historiography, the categories of historical analysis remained communal. So long as the categories of one's analysis remained Hindu and Muslim, whether one argued on behalf of communal conflict or communal harmony, one's thinking still remained limited to the confines of those communal categories. The logic of both the communal as well as the nationalist historians emanated from a common assumption of the existence of separate communal identities; so long as thinking was based on communal categories, this assumption was inescapable." Ibid., pp. 39-40.

commercial organisation etc.”<sup>27</sup> and questioning the earlier, obviously communal, periodisation of Indian history which separated medieval from ancient India with the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi in 1206 by the research on ‘early medieval India’, for it “opened up the possibility of seeing an extensive continuum of social and economic history from around the seventh or eighth to the thirteenth or fourteenth century, even as important changes occurred within the range of this continuum”<sup>28</sup> thus, marginalising the communal problematic and allowing the religion “merely the share that is its due in social life, along with the share of other elements, instead of giving it the overwhelming importance it had attained in the history writing of medieval India for so long,”<sup>29</sup> this problem didn’t came to an end. By making the core periphery doesn’t mean that it will not become crux again in the future! There are deliberate attempts by some groups in the post-independent India and especially during and after 1990’s that are targeted to keep this problem again at a central stage and by doing so to fulfil their vested political interests. The assertions put forward by such orthodox and regressive elements from both the communities that the relations between them were not good enough or cordial during the medieval period and that the present-day situation (i.e. so called bitter and dubious relations between them) is only a continuation and extension of their relations in the past are the examples of such calculated moves.

For a better understanding of historical process, it is necessary to use the political chronicles with a diligent and careful manner and scrutinise and analyse the data furnished by it in a proper historical perspective. It is also required to corroborate this evidence with other sources. The ‘information’ and ‘facts’ furnished by the medieval chronicles especially those pertaining to the Sultanate period are chiefly responsible for the attitude of some modern scholars regarding the problem of Hindu-Muslim relations. Hasan Nizami, the

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

first among the authors of political chronicles, opens his book as: "... you should know that war with the enemies of the faith has been considered necessary and obligatory by the decree of the Muslim law and also by the dictates of reason; and the merit of a holy war has also been set forth and expounded in the holy text [*Quran*]. Men of reason and sagacity rightly feel and have been genuinely convinced that the stability of the faith and the empire and the maintenance of the glory of the people and their religion are the results and concomitants of a holy war." He further states, "... the foundations of the state and the pillars of empire cannot be strengthened, nor can the frontiers of Islam be cleared of the enemies and antagonists of faith without wielding the sword. Even the laws of justice and the canons of equity cannot be effectively enforced among the subjects... nor would the affairs of the state be set in order and properly established, till the tyrants are prevented from destroying the life and property of the faithful. In this context wise men have said: If you want to maintain peace in the kingdom, you must not allow your sword to rest in peace."<sup>30</sup> Commenting upon this tendency of overemphasis on sword, Prof. K.A. Nizami had aptly remarked, "if as many people were killed in the early Turkish military operations in India as Sadr ud-Din Hasan Nizami would have us believe, there could not have been a single soul alive in India when these operations came to an end. If the number of temples reported to be destroyed during the war is accepted as true, not a single temple would have survived!"<sup>31</sup> He warns off the students of history accepting the data furnished by such historical writings at their face value because, "such exaggerated statements are motivated by the desire to extol the achievements of a monarch and thereby to enlist recruits to the army."<sup>32</sup> It is worth mention that "in recording military achievements of a ruler, a historian (i.e. a political chronicler) is guided by the spirit of *Fath Namas* which were fondly circulated in neighbouring countries

<sup>30</sup> Taj ul-Maathir, tr. Bhagwat Saroop, Delhi, 1998, pp. 8-9.

<sup>31</sup> K.A. Nizami, On History and Historians of Medieval India, New Delhi, 1983, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

and the purpose was to invite applause of the gallery.”<sup>33</sup> The purpose of propaganda, therefore, can’t be denied in the compilation of such pieces of writing and the elements of propaganda and exaggeration make the information furnished by the political chronicles under doubt and subject to scrutiny. Accepting these information at their face value compelled Elliot<sup>34</sup> to write, it appears purposely, in his preface to his *History of India* “The few glimpses we have, even among the short Extracts in this single volume, of Hindus slain for disputing with the Muhammadans, of general prohibitions against processions, worship, and ablutions, and of other intolerant measures, of idols mutilated, of temples razed, of forcible conversions and marriages, of proscriptions and confiscations, of murders and massacres, and of the sensuality and drunkenness of the tyrants who enjoined them.” He drew this picture, as he himself says, “from out the mass of ordinary occurrences, recorded by writers who seem to sympathize with no virtues, and to abhor no vices.” The purpose of the learned scholar in doing so was to “make our native subjects more sensible of the immense advantages accruing to them under the mildness and equity of our rule.” It is clear what Elliot was doing—to write the history of a conquered nation by the triumphant people and to propose justification for the existence of the present regime by contrasting its buoyancy with the ‘misrule’ of the previous government and in doing so a careful selection of facts which could suit this scheme was necessary and this he did with adequate success which was clearly an imperialist approach. Following the same line, the Muslim rule in India is depicted as one of long crusade against Hindu religion, culture and civilisation. K.M. Munshi, showing the Indian side of the picture of Turkish conquests as against “so exultantly referred to by the court chroniclers of the Sultanate” writes, “It was one of ceaseless resistance offered with one relentless heroism; of men, from boys in

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India as told by its own Historians*, vol. I, pp. xxi, xxii.

teens to men with one foot in the grave, flinging away their lives for freedom; of warriors defying the invaders from fortress for months...; of women in thousands courting fire to save their honour; of children whose bodies were flung into the wells by their parents so that they might escape slavery; of fresh heroes springing up to take the place of the dead and to break the volume and momentum of the onrushing tide of invasion."<sup>35</sup> Dr. A.L. Srivastava, pursuing similar track, asserts in his article *Hindu-Muslim Relations (1206-1526)*, "Throughout the Sultanate period (1206-1526), a wide gulf separated the two communities and that, to say nothing of enjoyment of any kind of rights and privileges, the very lives and properties of the Hindus were in perpetual danger. If they could not be converted to Islam en masse or butchered in cold blood, it was because of their great numerical superiority and physical strength."<sup>36</sup> In short, Islam has been portrayed as a warring religion the thirst of whose sword could only be quenched with the blood of the followers of another faith, a religion having no scope for catholicity and toleration and, of course, it is a wrong depiction.

To justify and legitimate the wars fought by the medieval rulers for the purpose of expansion, plunder and various other worldly motives, political chronicles denote them as *jihad*. The Quranic text *qatil fi Sabilillah*<sup>37</sup> (fight in the cause of Allah), *jahidu bi amwalikum wa anfusikum fi Sabilillah*<sup>38</sup> (strive and struggle, with your goods and your persons, in the cause of Allah) and *Wajahidu fillahi haqqa jihadih*<sup>39</sup> [And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive (with sincerity and under discipline)] may be quoted to support it. But, the Quran doesn't sanction war of aggression, it is in defence of religion—fight in the way of God not for the sake of territory and gold! The Quranic order to fight *jihad* was for Prophet Muhammad and was directed against the pagans of Arabia not

<sup>35</sup> Foreword in R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Struggle for Empire*, Bombay, 1966, p. xv.

<sup>36</sup> *Journal of Indian History*, December 1963, p. 585, quoted in A. Rashid, op. cit., p. 217.

<sup>37</sup> Quran: (IV, 74, 84)

<sup>38</sup> Quran: (IX, 41)

<sup>39</sup> Quran: (XXII, 78)

against the Hindus of India as is evident from the following verses: *Ya ayyuhan Nabiyyu jahidil kuffara wal munafiqina waghluz alaihim*<sup>40</sup> (O Prophet! Strive hard against the Unbelievers, and the Hypocrites, and be firm against them) and *qatilullazina yalunakum minal kuffare wal yajedu fikum ghilzah*<sup>41</sup> (fight the Unbelievers who are near to you and let them find harshness in you) which doesn't mention the inhabitants of land outside the Arab peninsula. So, "judged in the light of what the Muslims believe to be a Divine Command, it is difficult to justify the wars fought by the Muslims in India. Aggressive wars fought for territorial possessions and economic exploitation could not have the sanction of the Quranic law."<sup>42</sup>

"It is one of the tragedies of history" writes Dr. A. Rashid, "that religion has been dragged for the gratification of mundane motives."<sup>43</sup> In this sense, it can be said that religion is hexed to be used as a mask to hide one's actual motives and intentions or at best to be used as a validating device for legitimising one's faults and misdemeanours. "It is easy" Prof. M. Habib writes, "to twist one's conscience; and we know only too well how easy it is to find a religious justification for what people wish to do from worldly motives."<sup>44</sup> Assessing the after-effects of the plunders of Mahmud of Ghazni, he further states, "A religion is naturally judged by the character of those who believe in it; their faults and their virtues are believed to be the effect of their creed. It was inevitable that the Hindus should consider Islam a deviation from the truth when its followers deviated so deplorably from the path of rectitude and justice"<sup>45</sup> because "with a new faith everything depends on its method of presentation. It will be welcomed if it appears as a message of hope, and hated

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<sup>40</sup> Quran: (IX, 73)

<sup>41</sup> Quran: (IX, 123)

<sup>42</sup> A. Rashid, op. cit., p. 218.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>44</sup> M. Habib, *Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period*, vol. II, ed., K.A. Nizami, New Delhi, 1981, p. 78.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

if it wears the mask of a brutal terrorism."<sup>46</sup> In this respect it can be said that in the case of Islam, its "worst enemies have ever been its own fanatical followers."<sup>47</sup> But, despite the plundering raids of Mahmud and the consequential feeling of hatred of Hindus for Islam, it's also a fact that Mahmud "employed on a large scale Hindu officers and soldiers, both within the Punjab and outside India in his campaigns in Central Asia."<sup>48</sup> Tilak was among his principal military officers whom Baihaqi calls the son of a barber, Jai Sen, saying that "he was handsome in face and appearance, and had an eloquent tongue. He wrote an excellent hand, both in Hindi and Persian."<sup>49</sup> Following the death of Mahmud, Tilak became a great intimate of Khwaja Ahmad Hasan, the wazir of Mahmud's son and successor Masud. Tilak was made the wazir's secretary and worked as interpreter between him and the Hindus.<sup>50</sup> Tilak was not the only instance of Hindu chief who sided with Mahmud of Ghazni and his successors. Only fifty days following the death of Mahmud, Sewand Rai, a Hindu chief was sent by Masud with a large number of Hindu cavalry to pursue the nobles who had supported Masud's brother. He was, however, defeated and killed, together with a greater part of his troops.<sup>51</sup> Aptly commenting on this situation, Prof. M. Habib writes, "The career of Tilak, the Hindu, shows the rapidity with which Hindus and Mussalmans were both forgetting their religious differences in the service of a common king and the superbly oriental feeling of loyalty to the salt."<sup>52</sup> Analysing the nature of various wars fought by the Muslim rulers in India, Dr. P. Saran writes, "We hardly know of any period or any region under Muslim domination in which very large numbers of Hindus did not fight in the armies of their Muslim

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>48</sup> Satish Chandra, *State, Pluralism and the Indian Historical Tradition*, New Delhi, 2008, p. 34.

<sup>49</sup> Baihaqi, *Tarikh us-Subuktigin*, Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as told by its own Historians*, vol. II, p. 126.

<sup>50</sup> Satish Chandra, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>52</sup> M. Habib, *op. cit.*, p. 86.



sovereigns. Further we can hardly find an example of a war which was fought by Muslim rulers purely on a religious basis and for a religious cause. Most, if not all, wars fought by them were actuated by political motives and worldly ambitions."<sup>53</sup> Dr. A. Rashid<sup>54</sup> comments, "The period of clash and conflicts, mutual jealousy and antagonism for which political and economic reasons were as much as, and perhaps more, responsible than the religious factor, was a temporary phase" and "it was not possible for the two communities... to remain always segregated." He goes on to say, "In course of time the Hindus and Muslims learnt to tolerate and cooperate with each other" and with the gradual passage of time "a process of mutual assimilation and interaction of thought and culture took place." Indicating its various reasons, he says, "Geographical proximity, neighbourliness in residence, and social conditions, needs and requirements helped not only the 'Chinese wall'<sup>55</sup> to topple down but also helped the process of fusion and intermingling. The Muslim intellectuals and religious leaders were profoundly impressed by the Vedantic and the Yogic systems. Islamic mysticism in its Indian environment was not quite the same as the Sufis of the Islamic lands. The general Muslim mass could not remain immune from the beliefs and practices of their Hindu neighbours." They were also bound by providence taking them to the direction where various prevailing differences between them were had to be end as "humanity which constituted one great family has the same desires and aspirations and the same impulse."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> P. Saran, *Studies in Medieval Indian History*, Delhi, 1952, p. 139.

<sup>54</sup> A. Rashid, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

<sup>55</sup> "While the political status of the Hindus was not such as to inspire their love or good will towards the Muslims, the social and religious differences were so acute and fundamental that they raised a Chinese wall between the two communities..." R.C. Majumdar, *The Delhi Sultanate*, Bombay, 1967, p. 624.

<sup>56</sup> A. Rashid, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

## 0.5 SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE

In addition to indicating the points of similarity and resemblance between Hinduism and Islam during the medieval period, the significance and relevance of the present study lies in the interpretation and analysis of current situations and environment, keeping in view the demands and needs of the present circumstances since "the problem of the adjustment of the relations between the Hindus and Muslims, of the mutual assimilation of the cultures of both the communities, of syncretising their thoughts and practices has been one of great significance and of enduring impact on the people and culture of India... [and various] efforts are being made to interpret and reinterpret this question with a view to understanding the real nature of the mutual relations of the Hindus and Muslims, for, the proper understanding of this phenomenon is vitally associated with the historic growth of the composite India in medieval and modern times."<sup>57</sup>

## 0.6 LIMITATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES OF FURTHER RESEARCH

As far as limitations of this work is concerned, there is a dearth of sufficient data and facts to understand and analyze the conditions of the common people and it makes difficult to gauge the extent of relationship prevailed amongst different communities at the grass root level. Contemporary historical works didn't pay their attention towards the 'hut' but rather towards the 'palace'.<sup>58</sup> So, it becomes somewhat difficult to see contemporary social life

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<sup>57</sup> K.N. Chitnis, op. cit., p. 386.

<sup>58</sup> "Two distinct traditions of historiography seem to have determined the nature and character of medieval historical writings—the Arab and the Persian... The Arab tradition, rooted as it was in the Arab character, cherished democratic ideas and treated history as a *biography of nations*. The Persian tradition, drawing its inspiration from the monarchical background of its institutions, looked upon history as a *biography of kings*. The Arab historians, as a necessary corollary to their democratic

and conditions especially of common populace in a right and holistic way due to a serious shortcoming of medieval Indian historiography. We find occasional references of the circumstances and conditions of commoners in the *Bhakti* literature as well as the *Malfuzat* (table-talks) of the Sufis but they don't go very far in this respect as far as the magnitude of their rapport is concerned. Due to this compulsion, we were forced to take recourse to the political history and to the personality and oeuvre of the emperors. It is hoped that the pattern of this relationship could be portrayed correctly to a considerable extent by adopting such methodology.

Keeping in view the limitations stated above, there are immense possibilities of further research on this topic through the application of interdisciplinary approach. By incorporating the tools and techniques of Anthropology, Archaeology and Sociology, one might succeed in reconstructing to a fairly considerable extent the pattern of liaison that existed amongst the commoners in the distant past.

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approach, did not hesitate in incorporating in their narrative incidents and events which related to the life of the common man... The Persian historical approach was limited to kings and the historian concentrated on the life of the royalty and the governing classes to the exclusion of all other sections of population. The conspectus of a history planned on the Persian model was, therefore, naturally limited... Uptil the 10<sup>th</sup> century the Arab tradition of historiography held sway, but later on, when the spirit of Persian Renaissance permeated every aspect of life and thought of the ruling elite, the Persian tradition came to be revived, adopted and encouraged. All the Ghaznavid histories breathe the spirit of Persian Renaissance. When the Sultanate of Delhi was established, Persian tradition was a dominant factor in political life. The rulers of Delhi were racially Turks but culturally they were Persians. They emulated in all spheres of their life the Iranian traditions, customs, ceremonies, etiquette and festivals. Iranization was the prevailing trend. The Sultans, deeply soaked in these traditions as they were, expected their historians also to follow the Iranian traditions... Hasan Nizami, Fakhr i-Mudabbir and Minhaj, all the three historians of early medieval India, followed the Iranian traditions of historiography. Their works ignore all references to scholars, saints, poets, artists etc... With Barani a significant break-through takes place. He occasionally refers to sufis, scholars and other celebrities; even dancing girls and cup-bearers find a place in his narrative... Abul Fazl proceeded a step further and tried to combine the Arab and the Persian traditions of historiography. Despite the fact that the entry of common man in his narrative is not in his own right, but as a veritable background to the portrait of the Emperor and his activities, Abul Fazl definitely advanced the conspectus and perspective of history... Later on it became a tradition with historians to refer to literary and religious figures along with their narration of kings. But the tradition of Abul Fazl could not be developed on lines which could help a real synthesis of the Arab and Iranian traditions of historiography. In fact Arab historiographical tradition needed a totally different social and political milieu to flourish. Medieval Indian historical tradition therefore remained wedded to the Iranian concept of history." K.A. Nizami, op. cit., pp. 6-8.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **THE FORMATIVE PHASE: SEVENTH TO FOURTEENTH CENTURIES**

#### **1.1 ADVENT OF ISLAM IN INDIA**

Indo-Arab relations are of ancient times—their antiquity can be traced back to the second century B.C.<sup>1</sup> Persian and Arab traders were engaged in commerce on the western coast of India but “the Arab merchants of pre-Islamic period have left little account of their mercantile activities in the Indian Ocean and islands.”<sup>2</sup>

The rise of Islam (declaration of prophethood by the Prophet Muhammad) in 610 A.D. and the fusion of the Arab tribes under a centralised state gave an incredible momentum to the process of expansion which was going on since pre-Islamic days.<sup>3</sup> Muslim armies quickly subjugated Syria and Persia and began to float on the environs of India. Persian and Arab (now turned Muslim) merchants entered into the inheritance of their precursors and Arab fleets began to scrub the Indian seas. The first Muslim fleet showed in Indian waters in 636 A.D. during the Caliphate of Umar, when Usman Sakifi the Governor of Bahrain and Oman, sent an army across the sea to Thana.<sup>4</sup> About the same time expeditions were sent to Broach and Debul, but Umar’s disapproval provisionally postponed the activities of the fleet and the policy of armed meddling remained withheld. During the Caliphate of Umar the land approaches to India were surveyed and a great deal of information was

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<sup>1</sup> “In the time of Agatharcides there were so many Arabs on the Malabar coast that the people had adopted the Arab religion (probably Sabaeen).” Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, Allahabad, 1963, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Zaki, *Arab Accounts of India*, Delhi, 1981, pp. 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as told by its own Historians*, vol. I, pp. 115-16.

gathered which led eventually to the subjugation of Sind in the eighth century by Muhammad bin Qasim.<sup>5</sup>

The Muslim Arabs first settled on the Malabar coast either about the end of the seventh or during the eighth century A.D.<sup>6</sup> The first direct recorded evidence of their establishment in India comes from the eighth century.<sup>7</sup> Hereafter, Muslim influence grew rapidly. For over a hundred years the Muslims had been established on the Malabar coast. They were welcomed as traders, and, evidently, facilities were extended to them to settle and obtain lands and publicly follow their religion. The local rajas, particularly the Zamorin of Calicut, gave the Arabs liberty to intermarry and to preach their faith. Before the ninth century was far ahead, they had spread over the whole of the western coast of India and had created a disturbance among the Hindu populace, as much by their distinctive beliefs and worship as by the zeal with which they acknowledged and supported them.<sup>8</sup>

## **1.2 GROWTH OF THE MUSLIM POPULATION: CONVERSION-GENERALLY PEACEFUL WITH RARE EXAMPLES OF THE FORCED ONES**

The Muslim community of the Malabar coast (the Moplas) trace their origin from Arab ancestors who took high caste Nair women as their wives.<sup>9</sup> The word Mopla itself originated from *mappilla* (great child or bridegroom)<sup>10</sup> so this claim may be correct in some cases. A Mussalman could be seated by the side of a Nambutiri Brahman while a Nayar could not. The religious head of the

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<sup>5</sup> Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 32; T.W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, reprinted, New Delhi, 2002, p. 263.

<sup>7</sup> Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>9</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, 'Islamic Proselytisation', in G.A. Oddie, ed., *Religion in south Asia*, New Delhi, 1977, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.; Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 35.

Mappillas, the Thangal, was allowed to ride in a palanquin along with the Zamorin.<sup>11</sup>

Under the benefaction and back-up of the Zamorin, the Arab merchants settled in large numbers in his dominions and not only materially increased his power and wealth by their trade but straightforwardly supported him in his campaigns of aggrandizement.<sup>12</sup> The Zamorin thought so greatly of the Muslims that he undeniably promoted conversion in order to operate the Arab ships on which he depended for his aggrandizement. He ordered that in every family of fishermen (Makkuvans) in his dominion one or more of the male members should be nurtured as Muhammadans.<sup>13</sup>

The south of India was then (in the ninth century A.D.) greatly disturbed by the clash of religions, for Neo-Hinduism was striving with Buddhism and Jainism for the superiority. Politically, too, it was a period of unsettlement and turmoil. The Cheras were losing power and new dynasties were emerging. Obviously, the psyche of the people was anxious and they were prone to accept new ideas from whatever section they came. Islam emerged upon the scene with a simple cliché of faith, definite set of dogmas and rites, and democratic theories of social organisation. It produced an incredible result and before the first quarter of the ninth century was over, the last of the Cheranam Perumal Kings of Malabar who ruled at Kodungallur had become a convert to the new religion.<sup>14</sup> It must be noted that the story of the conversion of the said king is based on legendary accounts only<sup>15</sup> and as in most of such cases, many of its particulars are under serious doubts.<sup>16</sup> We may only infer from this description that the ruling dynasty of Caranganore came to an end with the resignation of a Perumal who became a Muslim probably in the ninth century. This certainly

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<sup>11</sup> Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 33-35.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. N.R. Farooqi, 'Early Sufis of India: Legend and Reality', in Mansura Haider, ed., *Sufis, Sultans and Feudal Orders*, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 4-5.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid; Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 35.

exercised an effect on common people. The Muslim population of Malabar grew and over a period of time many Hindu dignitaries joined their fold.

Arab voyagers and geographers of the ninth and tenth centuries have recorded the presence of Muslims in Malabar, Gujarat, Deccan, and even some parts of modern Uttar Pradesh.<sup>17</sup> Sulayman (c. 850), a trader who made several voyages between Iraq and China, when he passed through Gujarat, was deeply amazed to find that Arabs were well-treated by the local rulers.<sup>18</sup> Al-Masudi (d. 956), who travelled in India between 915-17, has referred to a large Muslim colony in Seymore (modern Chaul), 25 miles south of Mumbai.<sup>19</sup> He has also noted the affluence of the Muslims living in India.<sup>20</sup> Sulayman, Al-Masudi, Ibn Haukal and Abu Zaid all have the same opinion in praising Balhara (the Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta) for the kindness which they showed towards the Muslims. Sulayman jot down, "There doesn't exist among sovereigns, a prince who likes the Arabs more than Balhara, and his people follow his model."<sup>21</sup> Masudi found his co-religionists observing their religion explicitly everywhere. Speaking of the king of Gujarat, he says, "In his kingdom Islam is respected and protected, in all parts rise chapels and splendid mosques where the Muslims say their five daily prayers."<sup>22</sup> Al-Istakhri (951A.D.) discovered Muslims in the cities of the territory of Balhara, and "none but Mussalmans rule over them on the part of Balhara."<sup>23</sup> Ibn Haukal (968 A.D.) saw Jama Masjids at Famhal, Sindan, Saimur and Kambaya.<sup>24</sup> Al-Idrisi in the eleventh century states, "The town of Anhilwara is frequented by a large number of Mussalman traders who

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<sup>17</sup> N.R. Farooqi, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> N.R. Farooqi, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Tara Chand, op. cit., pp. 44-45.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

go there on business. They are honourably received by the king and his ministers, and find protection and safety."<sup>25</sup>

The Mussalmans made their advent on the eastern coast of South India in the tenth century.<sup>26</sup> They soon expanded over the whole coast and in a relatively short time, acquired great influence both in politics and in society.<sup>27</sup> Early Muslim Arabs' principal settlement on the east coast was Kalyanpattanam in Tinnevely district, near the mouth of Tamraparni river, where still the Labbes form the majority of population.<sup>28</sup> The Labbes of Mysore and the eastern coast assert their lineage from Arab Hashmites on the paternal side; their maternal predecessors were normally local Hindus.<sup>29</sup> In the twelfth century, the Muhammadans constructed a well-established community on the Coromandal coast, and they appeared to have gained adequate importance, for they are noticed along with Vaisyas as carrying presents to the Ceylonese General who invaded the Pandya kingdom in 1171-72 A.D.<sup>30</sup>

A remarkable thing to be noted here is the nature of relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims in south India that shows pattern of amity, peace and cooperation. No political pressure was involved in this early phase of proselytisation.

In Northern India, as pointed out earlier, Muslims began their infringement during the Caliphate of Umar, making their initial endeavour on the ports of the northern coast, i.e. Thana, Broach and Dabul. When Persia and Mekran had been taken over to the Arab empire, they occupied Sind. Throughout the seventh century, many incursions were made on the environs of Baluchistan and Sind and the land routes were comprehensively surveyed. Eventually in the time of Caliph Walid, Hajjaj who was governor of Iraq

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p. 39.

<sup>29</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>30</sup> Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 41.



organized an expedition which was sent under the headship of young Muhammad bin Qasim.<sup>31</sup> The capture of Sind and Multan by him between 711 and 713 opened the sluice gate of conversion by political force. Muhammad bin Qasim, according to the decree of the *ulema* of Damascus, gave Hindu and Buddhists the status of *dhimmis* (protected subjects) following the precedence set with regard to Zoroastrians.<sup>32</sup> The *dhimmis*' readiness to pay *Jizyah* (poll tax) besides other taxes, collectively known as *kharaj*, meant that they were allowed to renovate their places of worship. They were agreed to maintain the high offices they had held previously and to worship their deities in their temples. In other words, the earlier Hindu and Buddhist governing classes became the equal of the *dihqan* (hereditary village leader) class of Iran and Transoxiana.<sup>33</sup> They functioned as mediators between the planters and the vanquishers who belonged to the military class and had little administrative experience. But, the Arab rule in Sind didn't last long. Indifference of the home government together with its own inner contradiction led to the fragmentation of the Umayyad domination in Sind. Two independent Muslim states—Multan and Mansura came into existence. In the early tenth century Al-Masudi depicts Multan as one of the biggest border town of Islam with about one hundred thousand villages acquiescent to it. He also refers to the famous sun temple at Multan where people congregated in thousands from different parts of the country to perform pilgrimage. The temple also shielded Multan from the invasions of its Hindu neighbours. "When the unbelievers march against Multan," narrates Masudi, "and the Muslims do not find themselves strong enough to oppose them, they threaten to break this idol and their enemies then immediately withdrew their armies."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>32</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> N.R. Farooqi, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

Soon after Masudi's visit, the Qaramita Ismaili Shias seized Multan and Mansura between 977 and 985.<sup>35</sup> This gave a new momentum to proselytisation. The Ismaili propagandists, known as *dais*, converted both Sunnis and Hindus. The Ismailis Islamised Hindu religious symbols and mythology and offered Islam in a form which was willingly acceptable to Hindus. They permitted Hindus to maintain their ancestral religious rituals and didn't emphasise that the monotheism of Islam, with Muhammad as Prophet, involved a complete detachment from their past heritage.<sup>36</sup> Relations between the Ismaili governors of Multan and the Hindushahi dynasty of Kabul-Gandhar were amiable.

Between 1005 and 1011, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni invaded Multan twice to eradicate the Qaramita influence from this region. In 1011 the Qaramita monarch Abul Fath Daud bin Nasr was defeated and Multan was taken over to the Ghaznavid Empire. Fourteen years afterwards, when Mahmud was coming back from the Somnath campaign, passed through Mansura whose Qaramita ruler Khafif escaped the capital. He was pursued and overthrown. Ismaili power revitalized in Multan soon after Mahmud's death, but in 1175 Muizz ud-Din Muhammad bin Sam finally wrested Multan from them, thus bringing to an end the Qaramita power in Sind. In due course, proselytising Sufis succeeded in converting Ismailis to Sunnism and by 1363 most of them had embraced the faith of the majority Muslims.<sup>37</sup>

Almost three hundred years after the conquest of Sind, the Turks swamped the neighbouring province of Punjab. In 1010-11 Mahmud conquered and annexed Multan in conjunction with its adjuncts. Moving beyond Punjab, he successfully organized lightning campaigns against Mathura, Kannauj, Gwalior and Gujarat. He plundered the wealth and temples of the defeated Rajas at will and thus became helpful in generating in India, in the words of Al-

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<sup>35</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-16.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

Biruni, "the most inveterate hatred [towards] all Muslims."<sup>38</sup> Some modern historians defend Mahmud's 'wanton bloodshed and reckless spoliation of Hindu temples' as the logical 'course of legitimate warfare'<sup>39</sup> but their repentant justification fails to comprise the fact that the Hindus of the Gangetic *doab* had never aggravated Mahmud, and an unprovoked war is an act of aggression.<sup>40</sup> India had, however, no place in Mahmud's political ambitions. He remained satisfied with the annexation of Punjab, leaving the leftovers of the conquered territories unaffected.

It appears that Sultan Mahmud made no attempt to convert the Hindus of the Gangetic plains to Islam for the reason that his invasions in this region were designed chiefly to gain booty. But, in the Punjab region some tribal leaders and their followers were converted to Islam. Amongst these was Sukhpal, a grandson of the Hindushahi ruler Jaipal. Mahmud appointed him governor of Ohind, but he consequently renounced his new faith and rebelled.<sup>41</sup>

During his invasion of Kashmir in 1018, Mahmud is believed to have converted a Hindu Raja and ten thousand of his followers to Islam.<sup>42</sup> The narrative of this conversion didn't find place in Kalhana's *Rajtarangini* and Muslim historians normally exaggerate the process of proselytisation, in this situation it doesn't seem to be dubious. Apparently Hindus who had adopted Islam because of fear for their lives re-embraced their ancestral faith the moment the danger of Ghaznavid invasion was over, and Kalhana didn't consider this transient event mentionable.<sup>43</sup>

An attention-grabbing case of Islamisation was that of Gakkhar tribe. Like the Jats, they were both peasants and warriors. Their native soil extended from Hazra to west of Chinab. Some Gakkhar tribal groups living near Multan

<sup>38</sup> Quoted by M. Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rep. edn., New Delhi, 1967, p. 86.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. M. Nazim, *Life and Times of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., New Delhi, 1971.

<sup>40</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

may have admitted the Ismaili faith. The Gakkhars stoutly resisted Mahmud's invasions of the Peshawar region in 1008 and were brutally crushed. However, Mahmud is not known to have made any effort to Islamise them. The Ghurid sultan, Muizz ud-Din Muhammad bin Sam found their presence in the region a possible danger to his rule over Punjab. In 1204-5, he persistently overwhelmed a Gakkhar revolt, taking a large number of prisoners. It is believed that they were persuaded by a fellow Muslim captive to accept Islam, but their conversion was actually a forcible one.<sup>44</sup> The Gakkhars didn't forget the disgrace heaped upon them and retaliated themselves by killing Muizz ud-Din at Damyak on the banks of river Jhelum in 1206.

The forced Islamisation of the Gakkhars served as a pattern for the Islamisation of tribal groups in Punjab west of the Ravi, and the barracks in the forts build to avert the Mongol attacks of Sind and Punjab beginning in 1221, were an important apparatus of Islamisation in that region. The growth of the tremendously Muslim population west of the river Ravi might safely be credited to the conversion of the local tribal groups, where the Islamisation of the tribal-heads was normally followed by the Islamisation of their followers.<sup>45</sup>

### 1.3 ADVENT AND SETTLING DOWN OF MUSLIM SAINTS IN INDIA

The establishment of Muslim rule in Punjab prompted the migration of Sufis from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Central Asia to the Indian subcontinent. Lahore, which later became the administrative control centre of the Ghaznavid Punjab, soon came out to be a popular lodging place for the Sufi immigrants. The first Sufi known to be settled in Lahore was **Shaikh Ismail Lahori** (d. 1057). He arrived in Lahore in 1005. Sufi biographers state that Shaikh was not only the first Sufi of Lahore but also town's first public cleric and instructor of the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

*Quran*. Nineteenth century Sufi authorities speak of the proselytising zeal of the Shaikh but such claims must be treated as dubious due to the dearth of contemporary evidence.<sup>46</sup>

A contemporary of Shaikh Ismail was **Saiyyad Husain Zanjani** who seems to have reached Lahore soon after its takeover to the Ghaznavid Empire. According to *Fawa'id ul-Fuad*, Ali Hujwiri reached Lahore at a night and in the morning found Saiyyad Husain Zanjani died last night and he had to participate in his funeral rites;<sup>47</sup> it testifies the fact that the latter had settled in Lahore in the early eleventh century.

Saiyyad Husain's successor **Abul Hasan Ali bin Usman al-Jullabi al-Hujwiri al-Ghaznavi** better known as 'Data Ganj Bakhsh' (the master who bestows treasures) was by all accounts the greatest among the early Sufis of Punjab. He is the link between Mysticism as it developed in Persia and Khurasan, and the form it took in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. He significantly contributed to the spreading of Islam in South Asia.

Another renowned Sufi of Punjab was **Saiyyad Ahmad** (d. 1181). His father Saiyyad Zainul Abidin migrated from Arabia in early twelfth century and inhabited in village Kursi Kot, a suburb of Multan. He married the daughter of a native *zamindar* and Saiyyad Ahmad was the issue from this marriage. He went to Baghdad for his higher studies where he is reported to have met with Abdul Qadir Jilani and Shihab ud-Din Suhrawardi. On his way back to India, he met Khwaja Maudud Chishti (d. 1181-82) in Chisht (Afghanistan) and received *khilafat* (certificate of authority) from him. By the time he arrived Kursi Kot, his fame had spread far and wide. Seekers of both kinds—spiritual and worldly—came to him. Saiyyad's bounty earned him the title 'Sultan Sakhi Sarwar' (lord and master of the generous) and 'Lakh Data' (giver of lakhs). Numerous Hindu devotees, known as Sultani, bear out his

<sup>46</sup> N.R. Farooqi, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>47</sup> *Fawa'id al-Fuad*, tr. Ziya ul-Hasan Faruqi, New Delhi, 1996, p. 120.

popularity extending beyond the boundaries of caste or religion. As late as the nineteenth century, most non-Sikh Hindus of the Jalandhar division in Punjab were Sultani.<sup>48</sup>

A contemporary of Saiyyad Ahmad was **Azizuddin Lahauri**. A Sufi of the school of Junaid and an inhabitant of Baghdad, he reached Lahore in 1179. Two years after his advent in Lahore, Sultan Muizz ud-Din bin Sam (Muhammad Ghori) cordoned off the city. When the king of Lahore sought Azizuddin's help, he assured the king of his safety for the time being but foretold that the city would fall into the hands of the Ghorids after six years. The forecast proved to be completely true; Muhammad Ghori conquered Lahore in 1186 putting an end to more than 150 years of Ghaznavid rule in Punjab. Azizuddin died in 1216 and was buried in Lahore.<sup>49</sup>

An early Punjabi Sufi whose life and career have been the subject matter of countless legends was **Shaikh Abul Raza Ratan Al-Hindi** or **Baba Ratan Al-Hindi** who is said to have been born in Bhatinda in Punjab in the sixth century, he is supposed to have visited Arabia and accepted Islam at the hands of Prophet Muhammad and became his companion. The Prophet personally related *Ahadis* to Baba Ratan and in due course a treatise entitled *Risala i-Rataniyya* was compiled in which these traditions were recorded. Legends assign him the amazingly long life of seven hundred years, due to the blessings of the Prophet. He returned to Bhatinda and died in 1300 where he was buried. Although the *Ahadis* attributed to Baba Ratan were considered as apocryphal by the renowned Indian traditionist Raziuddin Hasan Saghani (d. 1252) yet the Irani Sufi Shaikh Ruknuddin Alauddaula Simnani (d. 1336) and the Egyptian Scholar Ibn Hajar Asqalani (d. 1449) were among the admirers of Baba Ratan. In yogic traditions Baba Ratan is identified with Gorakhnath, the chief preceptor

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<sup>48</sup> N.R. Farooqi, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 12-13.

of the Siddha cult of the yogis. These traditions claim that Prophet Muhammad had learnt yoga through Baba Ratan.<sup>50</sup>

A remarkable point to be noticed here is the presence of Muslim settlements in India before the Turkish conquest. As noticed earlier, the Muslim mystics peacefully made a way into the country and settled down at a number of important places. These immigrants lived outside the citadel area amongst the lower section of Indian populace, initially because of caste taboos, and secondly because of the facility of setting up contacts with the Indian masses. It seems that almost half a century before the Ghurid conquest of northern India, secluded Muslim cultural pockets had secured a grip in the country. Ibn i-Asir writes about Banaras: "There were Mussalmans in that country since the days of Mahmud bin Subuktigin, who continued faithful to the law of Islam and constant in prayer and good work."<sup>51</sup> At Bahraich was the last resting place of **Saiyyid Salar Masud** who "was a soldier in the army of Sultan Mahmud."<sup>52</sup> The very fact that both his name as well as his grave continued to exist through long years amid Ghaznavid invasions and the Ghurid victory of northern India amply shows that there was some Muslim population to take care of the grave and to preserve for future generation the tradition of Salar's martyrdom.<sup>53</sup> **Shaikh Muin ud-Din Chishti** came to Ajmer before the second battle of Tarain<sup>54</sup> and his profound humanism and sanctimonious way of life drew a band of dedicated followers around him. **Maulana Razi ud-Din Hasan Saghani**, the celebrated author of *Mashariq al-Anwar*, was born in Badaun<sup>55</sup> long before its Ghurid conquest. There existed a Muslim colony in Kanauj before the Turkish conquest as is evident by some modern researches.<sup>56</sup> In some towns of

<sup>50</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. I, New Delhi, 2003, pp. 320, 354.

<sup>51</sup> Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, vol. II, p. 251.

<sup>52</sup> K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, New Delhi, 2002, p. 82.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, see fn. 9.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> See R.S. Tripathi, *History of Kannauj*, Delhi, 1964.

Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, there are Muslim shrines which are credited by local traditions to the pre-Ghurid period. The tomb of Miran Mulhim in Badaun,<sup>57</sup> of Khwaja Majd ud-Din in Bilgram,<sup>58</sup> the grave on the Uncha Tilla Mohalla of Mallawan in Bilgram,<sup>59</sup> the dargah of Lal Pir in Azmat Tola at Gopamau,<sup>60</sup> the graveyard on the Bilsa Road in Badaun,<sup>61</sup> the Ganj i-Shahidan of Asiwan in Unnao,<sup>62</sup> the graves in Jaruha near Hajipur in Bihar, the grave of Imam Taqi Faqih near the western gate of Bari Dargah at Maner<sup>63</sup> all are believed to be pre-Ghurid period; and some families living in these towns assert that their forefathers settled there during this period.<sup>64</sup> These claims may or may not be true, but it's difficult to deny the local traditions in connection with the historicity of these graves, especially when they are corroborated by epigraphic evidence.<sup>65</sup>

The establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi accelerated the process of Muslim immigration to India. This was due to the Mongol invasions of Central Asia and of Khwarezm Empire. This process culminated in the conquest of Baghdad and of the disestablishment of Abbasid Caliphate. The Mongol invasion of Central Asia occurred after the unification of the Mongol and Turkic tribes on Mongolian plateau in 1206. The Mongol invasion of Khwarezmia from 1219 to 1221 and the sack and plunder of Bukhara, Samarqand, Urgench and Khurasan marked the beginning of the Mongol conquest of the Islamic states. It finally completed when Genghis Khan conquered the Khwarezm Empire in 1221. 1258 saw the conquest of Baghdad and the execution of Abbasid caliph al-Mustasim by Mongol forces under Hulagu Khan.

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<sup>57</sup> K.A. Nizami, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82, see fn. 13.



Many people including Jurists, *ulema*, Sufis, soldiers & many more poured into India & settled here. But, they formed a very little part of Muslim population in India. The major portion of Muslim population was consisted with the local converts.

#### **1.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE SUFIS TO PEACE AND AMITY: THE CHISHTIYAS, THE QADIRIYAS, THE SHATTARIYAS AND THE SUHRAWARDIYAS**

Prof. K.A. Nizami<sup>66</sup> has enunciated three basic principles upon which Sufi view of life was based and which determined their attitude towards God, man and society:

1. All people are the children of God on earth which meant that the humanity constitutes a big family on this planet.
2. Adoption of the ways of God. What it meant was that the aim of human life is to reflect the attributes of God in one's own thought and activity.
3. Faith in the Unity of Divine revelation, which paved the way for contact with people of diverse faiths and denominations without any discrimination.

As far as the first principle is concerned, the Sufis believed in the concept of universal brotherhood preached by Islam. The *Quran* says while denoting the common origin of human being, "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other not that ye may despise (each other)." <sup>67</sup> The Prophet Muhammad used to pray at night, "Oh God! I bear witness that all

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<sup>66</sup> K.A. Nizami, 'The Contribution of Indian Sufis to Peace and Amity', in Baidyanath Saraswati, ed., *Culture of Peace*, New Delhi, 1999.

<sup>67</sup> Quran: (XLIX, 13)

Thy creatures are brothers.”<sup>68</sup> Shaikh Sadi, the celebrated Persian poet, said that the reason for human brotherhood was that all human beings were made of the self-same clay and were as interdependent on each other as the limbs in the human body.<sup>69</sup> Shaikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi, a renowned Chishti saint of the sixteenth century, thus admonished his disciples in a letter:

Why this meaningless talk about the believer,  
the *kafir*, the obedient, the sinner,  
the rightly guided, the misdirected, the Muslim,  
the pious, the infidel, the fire worshipper?

*All are like beads in a rosary.*<sup>70</sup>

Once Dara Shukoh asked Shah Muhibbullah of Allahabad, a distinguished saint of the Chishti order during the seventeenth century, if religion permitted making a distinction between a Hindu and a Muslim? The saint’s emphatic reply was ‘no’. To strengthen his point further he said the Prophet was sent as a ‘Blessing for all Mankind’ (*rahmat ul-lil aalamin*) and therefore no distinction could be made between one individual and another on the basis of religion.<sup>71</sup>

The second principle, cultivation of Godly attributes within oneself was essential for attainment of perfection in human life. God’s way is that He extends his bounties to all irrespective of his devotion and status — the pious and the sinner, the believer and the non-believer, the high and the low. The sun gives its light and warmth to all living ones, the rain gives life to all, and the earth bears the burden of every human being. *Sahih Muslim* contains the following *Hadis i-Qudsi*:

On the Day of Judgement God will address a particular individual: ‘O Son of Adam! I fell ill but you did not attend on me.’ Bewildered, this individual will say: ‘How is that possible? Thou art the Creator and Sustainer of all the worlds.’

<sup>68</sup> Sunan i-Abu Daud, quoted by K.A. Nizami, op. cit.

<sup>69</sup> Quoted by K.A. Nizami, op. cit.

<sup>70</sup> Maktubat i-Quddusiya, Delhi, 1871, p. 205, quoted by K.A. Nizami, op. cit.

<sup>71</sup> Maktubat i-Shah Muhibbullah, MS, quoted by K.A. Nizami, op. cit.

God will reply: 'Doesn't thou know that such and such a creature of mine living near thee fell ill, but you did not turn to him in sympathy? If you had but gone near him you would have found Me by his side.' In like manner, God would address another individual: 'O Son of Adam! I had asked of you a piece of bread but you did not give it to me!' The individual would submit: 'How could this happen? Thou don't stand in need of anything'. And God will reply: 'Do not you remember that so and so among the hungry creatures of Mine had asked you for food and did you not refuse to give it to him? If you had fed him, you would have found Me by his side.'<sup>72</sup>

A necessary concurrent of following this approach was that man promptly responded to human misery and strained his every nerve to save people from hunger and misery. The Sufis identified service of God with the service of man, which was the cornerstone of their teachings, especially of the Chishtis. Khwaja Muin ud-Din Chishti, the founder of the Chishti *silsilah* in India, advised his followers to develop river-like generosity, sun-like benevolence and earth-like hospitality.<sup>73</sup> According to Khwaja Ajmeri, the acts of real worship were providing relief to the weary and the distressed, fulfilling the needs of the helpless and feeding the hungry.<sup>74</sup> Shaikh Nizam ud-Din Awliya classified devotion as intransitive (*taat i-lazmi*) and transitive (*taat i-mutaddi*), and said: "The intransitive devotion is that, by which only the devotee gets benefitted, and that consists of prayer, *haji*, fasting, the repetition of litanies and other similar things. But the transitive devotion is that which comes forth spontaneously in the form of, for example, expending on others and being sympathetic to the poor and the needy (out of sheer love for the good of all mankind); and the reward of this transitive devotion is immense and immeasurable."<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Quoted by K.A. Nizami, op. cit.

<sup>73</sup> Fawaid al-Fuad, tr., Introduction, p. 16.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

The third foundational principle of Sufi ideology, their faith in the Unity of Divine revelation has its origin in the *Quran*. It says: Say ye: "We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) Prophets from their Lord: we make no difference between one and another of them: and we submit to Allah."<sup>76</sup>

Commenting on this concept in the light of the *Quran*, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad remarks: "The *Quran* points out that the tragedy of man has laid in his effort to make distinction between prophets or in his accepting some and rejecting others."<sup>77</sup>

This basic approach opened the doors of deeper ideological contact and communication with people of different faiths, and put an end to "all notions of exclusiveness which had hitherto prevailed among mankind assigning divine blessings and favours to one's own community."<sup>78</sup> While strictly following the tenets of Islam, the Sufis didn't carry the difference of faiths to social relationships. Whilst firmly adhering to the veracity of Islam, Shaikh Nizam ud-Din Auliya could unhesitatingly claim seeing the reverence shown to their idols by the Hindus: *har qaum rast rahe dine wa qiblagah* (every people have their own path, religion and centre of worship). The adoption of such outlook of equivalence and admiration towards Hinduism ultimately led to the conviction of divine character of the Vedas and granting the status of *Ahl al-Kitab* (the people of the Book/Scripture) to the Hindus by Mirza Mazhar Jan i-Janan, a renowned Naqshbandi Sufi and poet of Delhi during the eighteenth century, as we shall see in the fifth chapter.

Keeping in view the aforesaid *weltanschauung*, certain practices could be pointed out, followed by Sufis in general and by the Chishtis in particular which exhibit their broad-mindedness and humanism and by doing so their

<sup>76</sup> Quran: (II, 136)

<sup>77</sup> Tarjuman al-Quran, ed. and tr., Syed Abdul Latif, 2 vols., Bombay, 1962-67, I, p. 78.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

coming closer to the Hindu populace which resulted in increasing acceptability of Sufism among them and also bridging the gap between the Hindus and the Muslims:

1. Intermingling freely with the Hindus: taking Hindu girls as wives.
2. Adoption of Indian way of living: vegetarianism.
3. Use of Hindawi as a medium of literary expression.
4. Taking up yogic practices as a means of self-elevation and purification.

As far as interacting unreservedly with the Hindus is concerned, it was due to the Sufis' faith in the Unity of Divine revelation which considered Hinduism a true religion in the same way as Islam. But it also had a humane aspect. Since the Sufis especially the early Chishtis led a life of sanctity and austerity and they also offered peace and serenity to the anxious ones, their charismatic personality drove men from all classes and sections of Indian society to their hospices. This was particularly true to the *jama'at khanah* of Baba Farid and Shaikh Nizam ud-Din Auliya.<sup>79</sup>

So far as taking Hindu girls as wives, *Sultan ul-Hind* Khwaja Muin ud-Din Chishti, the founder of the Chishti *silsilah* in India also acted as an initiator of this practice. It is said that Khwaja's second wife was the daughter of a local Hindu chieftain who had been seized in battle.<sup>80</sup> But Khwaja's most profound contribution to the evolution of Indo-Muslim Culture as pointed out by Dr. S.A.A. Rizvi is that "his simple, ascetic life was an inspiration to both the Turkic *ghazis* (fighters of religious war), who swelled the Islamic forces through a lust of plunder, and to the Hindus who were forcibly converted to Islam. His style of living tended to remind both conqueror and vanquished of the social ethics

<sup>79</sup> See S.A.A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. I, pp. 141-44 and 163-66 for details.

<sup>80</sup> Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dihlawi, *Akhbar ul-Akhyar*, Delhi, 1914, p. 114 and Ghausi Shattari, *Gulzar i-Abrar*, Manchester MS, f. 15a, quoted by S.A.A. Rizvi, *Islamic Proselytisation*, p. 25.

of Islam, as interpreted by Sufis, which attached no importance to material power and wealth, stressing only piety, simplicity and devotion to God.”<sup>81</sup>

Adoption of Indian way of living by the Chishtis was a remarkable feature of this order. Shaikh Hamid ud-Din Suwali Nagauri, disciple and successor of Khwaja Muin ud-Din Chishti who bestowed upon him the title of *Sultan ut-Tarikin* (King of Hermits), lead a withdrawn and ascetic life as an agriculturist. He cultivated a small plot in his village on whose income he lived and drank milk from his own cow. His wife did her own spinning and the yarn thus produced was sufficient for their scanty clothing. He was so responsive to the Hindu sensibilities that he strongly advocated no harm be done to any form of life, and pleaded with his followers to be totally vegetarian. He requested his descendants not to disturb meat for his soul’s peace after his death.<sup>82</sup> It shows the influence of either Jainism or the then prevailing thought which later came to be known from the fifteenth century onwards as Bishnoism, preached by Guru Jambheshwar or Jambhoji, born at Pipasar village of Nagaur in the year 1451.

Adopting Hindawi as a medium of literary expression was done by both Shaikh Hamid ud-Din Nagauri and Baba Farid Ganj i-Shakar, a disciple of Shaikh Qutub ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki who himself was a disciple and successor of Khwaja Ajmeri at Delhi. In *Surur us-Sudur*, Shaikh Hamid quotes a touching verse emphasising the fact that differences in nomenclature failed to emasculate the truth that Reality is One.<sup>83</sup> The meaning of this couplet is that an entity could assume hundreds of different forms and be known by the same number of names, but this didn’t change the fact that they all originated from One. Imparting the consequence of this development Dr. S.A.A. Rizvi remarks,

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<sup>81</sup> A History of Sufism in India, I, p. 123. For the process of evolution of the mausoleum of Khwaja Muin ud-Din and association of the Hindus to it see S.L.H. Moini, ‘Dargah Khwaja Sahib: A Spiritual Rendezvous During the Pre-Mughal Days (1236-1562)’ and ‘The Hindus and the Dargah of Ajmer (1658-1858)’ in *The Chishti Shrine of Ajmer: Pirs, Pilgrims, Practices*, Jaipur, 2004.

<sup>82</sup> *Surur us-Sudur*, p. 221, quoted by S.A.A. Rizvi, A History of Sufism in India, I, p. 128.

<sup>83</sup> *Surur us-Sudur*, p. 69, quoted by S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 327.

"Although earlier Sufis had expressed this idea in many different ways in both Persian poetry and prose, the later use of Hindawi in further explanations of this concept was most probably a significant factor in the arousal of Hindu interest in Sufism."<sup>84</sup> Shaikh Farid ud-Din Ganj i-Shakar or popularly known as Baba Farid, generally considered as the first major poet of the Punjabi language, has the unique distinction that his 112 couplets (*saloks*) and four hymns were incorporated in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the Sikh Holy Book, by the fifth Sikh Guru, Arjan Dev in 1604.<sup>85</sup> There is a controversy whether these poems were composed by Baba Farid himself or by Shaikh Ibrahim, a successor of Baba Farid and the then head of his shrine, whom Guru Nanak met twice in Ajodhan. "A careful analysis of Baba Farid's *saloks* in the *Guru Granth* would tend to suggest they were not composed by one individual. Therefore it is wrong to ascribe them either to Shaikh Ibrahim or another of Baba Farid's descendants, known as Farid Sani. They represent the teachings of Baba Farid through the years from his own time to the fifteenth century and were therefore composed by a number of different descendants, all using Farid as their *nom de plume*."<sup>86</sup>

Taking up yogic practices as a means of self-elevation and purification was not somewhat a new development on the part of the Chishtis. The yogic movement worked as the chief interacting factor between Sufism and Hindu mystic traditions from the eleventh to the sixteenth century, as far as the Indic region is concerned. During the course of its development, Buddhism besides its previous divisions in Hinayana and Mahayana further got divided into Vajrayana or Tantric Buddhism and Sahajayana. Sahajayana or Sahajiya Buddhism "was an offshoot of Tantric Buddhism, the Vajrayana or 'Vehicle of the Thunderbolt', which was patronised by the Pala kings of Bengal. In northern India Vajrayana, the third vehicle superseded Mahayana Buddhism,

<sup>84</sup> A History of Sufism in India, I, p. 327.

<sup>85</sup> Harbhajan Singh, Sheikh Farid, Delhi, 2002, p. 11.

<sup>86</sup> A History of Sufism in India, I, p. 329.

the second. It featured the worship of feminine deities and magico-religious practices by which superhuman powers and salvation could be attained."<sup>87</sup> The Siddhas or Siddhacharyas were the followers of the Sahajiya Buddhism which began during the eighth century. They wrote poetry in vernacular to promote the tenets of Sahajayana. "This literature continued to influence, in both style and spirit, the poetry written in local dialects until the twelfth century."<sup>88</sup>

In reaction to the excessive sexual enjoyment-oriented yogic practices of the Siddhas, the Shaivite Nath cult developed, emphasising Hatha Yoga practice although borrowing much from the former. The Adi Nath, the First Lord of the Naths, it is believed was an incarnation of Lord Shiva. The first human *guru* of the cult was Matsyendranath, also a Siddha, reported to have lived in the tenth century A.D.<sup>89</sup> His weakness for women associated him with the left-handed cults of the female deities. Gorakhnath, Matsyendra's disciple, believed to have been borne from the sweat of Shiva's breast, rescued his master. His personality is shrouded by mist of myth and legend. In the yogic tradition it is believed that Prophet Muhammad learnt yoga through Gorakhnath.<sup>90</sup> According to the *Siddha-Siddhanta-Paddhati* of the Hatha Yogis, *ha* (ह) means sun and *tha* (ठ) means moon. To link both of them is called the Hatha Yoga,<sup>91</sup> meaning to reverse the nature of the senses. Members of the Nath cult also wrote poetry to disseminate the principles of their sect from twelfth to the fourteenth century. "From the eleventh century the Nath yogis began to spread throughout northern India, and from their centre at Peshawar moved to all parts of Central Asia and Iran, at the same time influencing both Qalandars and Sufis... All Naths however were hostile to Hindu caste distinctions, particularly

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 331.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 354.

<sup>91</sup> Nagendra, ed., *Hindi Sahitya Ka Itihas*, Noida, 1998, p. 67.



those practised by Brahmans and respected even the pariah and the untouchables."<sup>92</sup>

We find references of Nath yogi visitors (referred to as *jogis*) to the *jama'at khanah* of Baba Farid on the testimony of Shaikh Nizam ud-Din Auluya.<sup>93</sup> *Jogis* also visited the *jama'at khanah* of Shaikh Nizam ud-Din because of his being spiritually eminent and so to solicit his blessings.<sup>94</sup> Baba Farid was an adept in yogic practices who failing to be satisfied despite his severe ascetic exercises, performed a *chilla i-makus* (inverted *chilla*) with the permission of his *pir* Khwaja Bakhtiyar Kaki.<sup>95</sup> Shaikh Nasir ud-Din Mahmud Chiragh i-Dehli, the most prominent of Shaikh Nizam ud-Din's *khalifas* and his chief successor in Delhi, prior to be initiated as a disciple had completed eighteen years of strenuous mystical exercises, consequently it was expected that he would surpass many of Shaikh Nizam ud-Din's other disciples owing to his being spiritually so advanced.<sup>96</sup> Speaking about the control of breath as an essential for spiritual training, once he said, "Sufi is one who counts his breath. One meaning of this saying is that 'The loftiest in this path is one who has control over his *nafs*.' Experienced *jogis*, who are known in Hindi as Siddha, count their breath."<sup>97</sup> In another discussion which shows the influence of Hinduism over him, he told his audience, "It is written in a book that whoever dies having passed his life following any particular trait, on the Day of Resurrection he is created in that form. For instance, if anybody had been under the excessive spell of sex, he is recreated in the form of pig; if he had been in the grip of fury (and frown) he is resurrected in the form of panther."<sup>98</sup>

<sup>92</sup> A History of Sufism in India, I, pp. 332-33.

<sup>93</sup> Fawaid al-Fuad, tr., pp. 424, 434-35.

<sup>94</sup> K.A. Nizami, The Life and Times of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, Delhi, 1991, p. 127.

<sup>95</sup> A History of Sufism in India, I, p. 140; K.A. Nizami, The Life and Times of Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj i-Shakar, Delhi, 1998, pp. 20-22.

<sup>96</sup> A History of Sufism in India, I, p. 185.

<sup>97</sup> Khair ul-Majalis, pp. 59-60, quoted by K.A. Nizami, The Life and Times of Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh i-Dehli, Delhi, 1991, p. 142.

<sup>98</sup> Khair ul-Majalis, pp. 78-79, quoted by K.A. Nizami, op. cit., p. 143.

Interest shown in yoga by the Islamic circles is evident in Al-Biruni's Arabic translation of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*,<sup>99</sup> and of *Amrita-Kunda*, a work on Hatha Yoga, into Arabic by Qazi Ruknuddin Samarqandi and then into Persian by Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus Shattari (d. 1562-63).<sup>100</sup> Shaikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi, a renowned fifteenth-sixteenth century Chishti Sufi, had a great acquaintance with both the Arabic and Persian versions of the *Amrita-Kunda*, which were well-known prior to the translation of Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus.<sup>101</sup> He wrote *Rushd-Nama*<sup>102</sup> which identifies Sufi beliefs based on *Wahdat al-Wujud* with the philosophy and practices of Gorakhnath.<sup>103</sup> "The Shaikh's interest in Nath teaching was not merely theoretical. In several ways he found Nath ascetic exercises compatible with Chishti practices... For years after the evening *namaz* he would perform the *namaz i-makus*. This was carried out by hanging, probably head downwards, and was generally continued the whole night. Although Chishtis believed this type of *namaz* to be a legacy from the Prophet, Shaikh Abu Said bin Abil Khair was the first known Sufi to have practised it; the first Indian Sufi to perform it was Baba Farid. Shaikh Abdul Quddus considered it to be the counterpart of the *ulti sadhna*. Continual performance of *namaz i-makus* produced in the Shaikh a condition he called *sultan i-zikr* in which one experienced strange changes in the physical and spiritual condition including a deprivation of the senses and a lack of feeling of consciousness. Repeated appearances of the *sultan i-zikr* led to the state of *fana al-fana*. A description of this spiritual experience, given by Shaikh Rukn ud-Din [son of Shaikh Abdul Quddus], would tend to indicate that *sultan i-zikr* was comparable to the Nath Siddha's *nad*, and that *fana al-fana* was a state experienced by the *jivan-mukta*."<sup>104</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Edward C. Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, rep., New Delhi, 1989, I, p. 55.

<sup>100</sup> *A History of Sufism in India*, I, p. 335.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Hindi tr. as *Alakhbani* by S.A.A. Rizvi and S. Zaidi, Aligarh, 1971.

<sup>103</sup> *A History of Sufism in India*, I, p. 336.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 342.

Prof. Ziya ul-Hasan Faruqi remarks enumerating the reasons for the success of the Chishti *silsilah* in India, "The Chishti *shaikhs* did not bother much about the theoretical aspects of *tasawwuf*. They rather preferred to emphasis its practical aspects, held the view that therein it was all practice that counted and that as such it was not possible to describe the diversified mystic experience known as spiritual 'states' and 'stations'. This emphasis on practical aspects of *tasawwuf* was, therefore, one of the main reasons for the speedy success of the Chishtiyah order in India; the other three reasons, according to many, being: (1) its strong disapproval of mixing with sultans, princes or nobles, (2) its exhortations for close contact with the poor and the downtrodden and its uncompromising attitude towards all forms of political oppression and social injustice, and (3) its bold stand in favour of *sama*, perhaps, with a view that, being in consonance with the role of music in some modes of Hindu worship, it would well serve as a basis of contact with local people and would facilitate mutual adjustments between the two communities."<sup>105</sup>

Belief in the supernatural elements and miracles by the Hindus prompted the Qadiriya, who succeeded the Suhrawardiyas in the Punjab and Sind region, to win over a number of them to Islam. A direct descendant of the founder of the Qadiriya order Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani (d. 1166) was Shaikh Abdul Qadir Sani, the second (d. 1533). Shaikh Abdul Haq, the celebrated author of the *Akhbar ul-Akhyar*, credits him with a whole host of miracles, the most significant was the curing of diseases. When a plague struck Multan, those were immediately cured who ate grass where Shaikh Abdul Qadir Sani performed his daily ablutions.<sup>106</sup> According to Dara Shikoh, Shaikh Abdul Qadir converted a number of Hindus, in addition to causing many defiant Muslims to adopt a pious life.<sup>107</sup> Badauni's claim that Shaikh Dawud who came

<sup>105</sup> Fawaid al-Fuad, tr., Introduction, p. 15.

<sup>106</sup> *Akhbar ul-Akhyar*, Delhi, 1914, pp. 204-5, quoted by S.A.A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. II, New Delhi, 2002, p. 59.

<sup>107</sup> *Safinat ul-Auliya*, Lucknow, 1872, p. 69, quoted by S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 59.

from Chati in Lahore converted fifty to hundred Hindus each day would make the number of converts annually an impossible around 15000;<sup>108</sup> it seems that the miracles attributed to him prompted a number of Hindus, besides some members of tribes on the brink of the newly-settled town of Shergarh, to embrace Islam and it was his personality and spiritual accomplishments whose impact swept Qadiriya influence from Punjab to Delhi-Agra regions.<sup>109</sup>

Similarly, the Shattariyas owing to their mastery over yoga and their ability to perform miraculous feasts converted disciples both from Hindus and from Muslim adherents of other Sufi orders. Shaikh Baha ud-Din (d. 1515-16), originally a Qadiriya but initiated into the Shattariya order by Shaikh Buddhan Shattari who himself was a descendant of Shah Abdullah, founder of the Shattariya *silsilah* in India. According to Shaikh Baha ud-Din, breath control was necessary for rendering *zikr* effective. He advised the novice that he should use *zikr* not only with Arabic and Persian words, but might also use a Hindi *zikr*. He also recommended the sitting posture of *jogis* and outlined various magico-mystical practices for the attainment of paranormal powers.<sup>110</sup> Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus Gwaliyari, the most influential Shattari Sufi in the first part of the sixteenth century and author of the *Jawahir i-Khamsa*, performed severe ascetic exercises for twelve years in the caves of Chunar,<sup>111</sup> presently in the Mirzapur district in U.P. In 1558-59, Badauni saw him riding through the market-place in Agra. He was profoundly impressed by the humility of the Shaikh as he constantly bowed low on the saddle, returning the greetings of the people surrounding him<sup>112</sup> and also his respect for the beggars by remain standing before them.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. T.W. Haig, III, p. 57.

<sup>109</sup> A History of Sufism in India, II, p. 63.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>111</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Haig, III, p. 7.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

In Bengal, it seems that the Shattariyas reinforced the activities of the descendants of Shaikh Jala ud-Din Tabrizi's<sup>114</sup> disciples. Shaikh Jalal was a disciple and successor of Shaikh Shihab ud-Din Suhrawardi, founder of the Suhrawardiya order. The Shattariyas not only converted many animists, Buddhists and Hindus in Bengal, but they also made Java and Sumatra important Shattariya centres by extending their activities from Bengal to there.<sup>115</sup>

Shaikh Baha ud-Din Zakariya, the real founder of the Suhrawardiya order in India, remained the most celebrated Sufi in Multan for about fifty years till his death in 1262.<sup>116</sup> The continual Mongol invasions of Multan made the life of townsfolk pitiable, but they had a great blessing in the form of Shaikh Baha ud-Din whose presence was a great solace to them.

Shaikh Rukn ud-Din Abul Fath, grandson of Shaikh Baha ud-Din Zakariya, was a contemporary and close friend of Shaikh Nizam ud-Din Auliya. Sultan Qutb ud-Din Mubarak Shah (r. 1316-20) wished that Shaikh Rukn ud-Din's presence in Delhi might outshine that of Shaikh Nizam ud-Din, but the close friendship between them frustrated the Sultan and he was failed in arising even the least jealousy between the two great Shaikhs.<sup>117</sup>

According to Jamali, whenever Shaikh Rukn ud-Din went to the court of Sultan Qutb ud-Din, the people of Delhi would place petitions inside the Shaikh's *takht i-rawan* (a type of palanquin similar to a movable throne)... The petitions would then be brought in and, after having read them, the Sultan would write sympathetic replies. According to a Sufi tradition, the Shaikh would remain at court until all the requests had been granted.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>114</sup> See A History of Sufism in India, I, pp. 199-202 for details.

<sup>115</sup> A History of Sufism in India, II, p. 427.

<sup>116</sup> A History of Sufism in India, I, p. 194.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>118</sup> Jamali Kanboh Dihlawi, Siyar ul-Arifin, Delhi, 1893, p. 143, quoted in A History of Sufism in India, I, p. 212.

## 1.5 NATURE OF THE STATE DURING THE SULTANATE PERIOD AND ITS ATTITUDE TOWARDS ITS NON-MUSLIM SUBJECTS

A determining factor of the Hindu-Muslim relations during the Delhi Sultanate is the nature of the State during this period. In ancient India the king's duty was derived both from the *Dharmshastra* and the *Arhtashastra*, i.e. both from the canon law and politics, as a tenth century commentator of *Manusmriti*, Medhatithi explains.<sup>119</sup> The king's *rajdharma* or public duty is based to a large extent on the latter. It implies that the religion and politics are separate. The king is guided chiefly by politics, despite the fact that he does have a preceptor to advise him, and wouldn't carry out an open violation of canon law if avoidable. Thus, in a real sense, the State in ancient India was essentially secular.<sup>120</sup>

The situation in medieval India under the Sultans of Delhi was not primarily different. Ala ud-Din Khalji straightforwardly told Qazi Mughis ud-Din of Bayana that he didn't know what was lawful and unlawful, but whatsoever was the need of the situation or the good of the state that he decreed.<sup>121</sup> The outcome of this attitude was that even an orthodox man like the historian Ziya ud-Din Barani summed up that *a truly Islamic State could not exist in India*. It could only be a state which had outer trappings of Islam.<sup>122</sup> A Muslim king was expected to see that there was no open infringement of the laws of Islam; that trustworthy, God-fearing Muslims should be employed as *qazis* (judges); that no honour should be shown to Hindus; and that in general the ruler should constantly wage war (*jihad*) against the nonbelievers. The personal conduct of the citizens didn't worry the king; nor did the private life of the king concern the public. "Between the emperor-sultans and the Hindus within their

<sup>119</sup> Satish Chandra, *Historiography, Religion and State in Medieval India*, New Delhi, rep., 2004, p. 37.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

dominions, the unifying bond not a bond of faith. It was that of sovereign and subject—a tie quite well-understood on both sides... So long as they yielded him the obedience due, he [the sultan] was quite content. And the Hindus while ready to support the emperor's power in political matters, would tolerate no meddling with their creed."<sup>123</sup> Such type of state policy which Barani calls *jahan-dari* that is discernible from the policy of *din-dari* which visualised the stern enactment of all the laws of *Shariat*.<sup>124</sup>

A second effect was the development of secular laws called *Zawabit*, in differentiation from Holy Laws or *Shariat*. It's worth-mention that one of the most important collections of such laws, the *Zawabit i-Alamgiri*, was compiled in the reign of the most orthodox Muslim ruler, Aurangzeb. It is, thus, evident that the state in India was never religious—neither during ancient period it was really Hindu nor in medieval India it was truly Islamic. In course of time, as the Hindus were admitted to the highest echelons of administration in consequence of the pressure of circumstances, it became even less religious and more secular in its stance.

Muhammad bin Tughlaq in the fourteenth century was the first among Sultanate rulers who systematically tried to enrol Hindus into the central administrative mechanism, i.e. the nobility, so as to develop a homogeneous ruling class. He not only appointed Hindus into the nobility but “people from communities which had so far not been the source of recruitment for the nobility”<sup>125</sup> were also employed. The growth in the number of Afghans was probably due to this cause.<sup>126</sup> He also appointed men of low birth as officers although Barani informs us that Muhammad Tughlaq denounced such type of

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<sup>123</sup> M. Habib, *Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period*, vol. I, ed., K.A. Nizami, New Delhi, 1974, p. 17.

<sup>124</sup> Satish Chandra, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>125</sup> M. Athar Ali, ‘Nobility under Muhammad Tughlaq’, in *Mughal India: Studies in Polity, Ideas, Society, and Culture*, ed., Irfan Habib, New Delhi, 2007, p. 33.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

men.<sup>127</sup> Two of those persons whom Barani mentions are Aziz Khummar and Maqbul.<sup>128</sup> Kishan was a Hindu of low status,<sup>129</sup> but all Hindus were not of low caste. It was this policy of appointing Hindus to administrative machinery that showed the way to the criticism that Muhammad Tughlaq met with *Jogis* and played Holi, or that he gave up congregation prayers.<sup>130</sup> Muhammad Tughlaq had a real interest in Hinduism out of his natural curiosity, but his policy of appointing Hindus had certain political purposes to cater irrespective of his own ideological broad-mindedness.

Muhammad Tughlaq's policy of forming mixed nobility might have been influenced partly by unconventional behaviour, but it was also partly the response to a certain isolation already existing between the Sultan and the established nobility. Unluckily for him, the varied elements couldn't be combined together into homogenous nobility. But this abortive step paved the way for the formation of 'official nobility' under Akbar.

Points of contact between the Hindu and Muslim reigning classes enhanced after the disintegration of the Delhi Sultanate. In Bengal as in Gujarat, in Kashmir as in the Bahmani Kingdom, Hindus were appointed ministers and they continued to operate the lower levels of administration.<sup>131</sup> Marital alliances between the two were an indicator of the junction of their interests and greater social interaction. Firoz Shah Bahman married the daughter of the Vijaynagar ruler, Deva Raya, in 1403. The Gujarat rulers married Rajput princesses. And, the favourite queens of Zain ul-Abidin, the famous Kashmiri ruler, were Hindus.<sup>132</sup> The Sufi and the *Bhakti* movements built up in this atmosphere of liberalism.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., pp. 33-34.

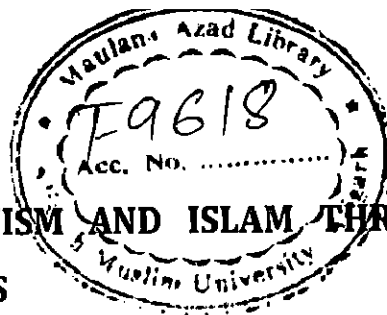
<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.





## 1.6 INTERACTION OF HINDUISM AND ISLAM THROUGH THE BHAKTI AND SUFI MOVEMENTS

"From the eleventh to the fifteenth century, it would appear that as far as the Indic region is concerned, the main interaction between Sufism and Hindu mysticism was through the yogic movement."<sup>133</sup> The Sufi writers mention the Buddhist *shramans*, the Jain *yatis*, the Hindu *siddhas* and yogis undiscernibly as *jogis*. Yogic and ascetic practises were common among them. The most influential and widespread among the *jogis* were the Nath-*panthis* who had their main seat at Gorakhpur in modern east Uttar Pradesh. The Nath-*panthi* ideas were schematized by Gorakhnath. As discussed earlier, in yogic tradition it is said that Prophet Muhammad had learnt yoga through Gorakhnath. The Nath-*panthi jogis*, from their headquarters at Peshawar, and travelling in pairs, they became familiar figures in Central and West Asia. Interest in yoga in Islamic circles, especially among Sufis is evident by the translation of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* into Arabic by Al-Biruni, and of *Amrita-Kunda*, a work on Hatha Yoga, into Arabic by Qazi Ruknuddin Samarqandi and then into Persian by Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus Shattari (d. 1562-63).<sup>134</sup> The presence of *jogis* in the *jama'at-khana* of Sufis is referred to in the context of Shaikh Safi ud-Din Gazruni of Sindh, Baba Farid, Nizam ud-Din Auliya, Nasir ud-Din Chiragh i-Dihli, and others. From this it would appear that their presence in the gatherings of Sufis was considered quite normal.<sup>135</sup>

Interaction between the Sufis and *jogis* is far more noteworthy than has generally been considered. Control over the senses through yogic practises was an established phase in the realisation of mystical union. It also inferred the capability to rise above space and time, and possessing miraculous powers

<sup>133</sup> Satish Chandra, 'Interaction of Bhakti and Sufi Movements in South Asia', in *State, Pluralism and the Indian Historical Tradition*, New Delhi, 2008, p. 150.

<sup>134</sup> A History of Sufism in India, I, p. 335.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., pp. 323, 335.

including the power to foresee and to heal. This and the reputation of the leading Sufis as holy men increased their popularity. Many of the *jogis* were wandering saints who not only shared spiritual knowledge, their presence in the *khanqahs* and the *jamaat khanas* further increased the prestige of the Sufis among the Hindu masses.<sup>136</sup>

Both the Sufis and the *jogis* were, till thirteenth-fourteenth centuries, regarded as the representative of the masses in opposition to the classes. This impression was reinforced by the Sufis choosing a life of poverty and aloofness, though this was deviated by some of the *silsilahs* and individual saints. Primarily, the Sufis were those who were disenchanted with the state and society of their times and were against any association with them. As a result, they had to cope with maltreatment. Later on, on account of their growing popularity, the rulers and the ruling classes sought to use them for their political objectives and private benefit. This led to a certain uncertainty in the position of the Sufi saints and *silsilahs*, some becoming closely associated with the state, others retaining an attitude of aloofness. Both these attitudes found their best embodiment in the ideologies of Suharavardi and Chishti *silsilahs* respectively.<sup>137</sup>

In this perspective, the status of the Nath-*panthi siddhas* and *jogis* in the Hindu society needs to be comprehended. Most of the Nath-*panthi siddhas* and *jogis* were of low-caste (Shudras). They resisted the caste-based disparities, condemned the doctrine of karma and reincarnation preferred by the Brahmans, and didn't favour image worship.<sup>138</sup> Like the early Sufis, the *jogis* were feared and sometimes persecuted, being blamed for plotting against the state. However, this section could make a lot of progress in a significant degree owing to the loss of prestige and power of the Brahmans and the fall down of the Rajput-Brahman alliance following the Turkish conquest. As a result, the

<sup>136</sup> Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. K.A. Nizami, Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India, pp. 255-272.

<sup>138</sup> Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 152.

preceding ruling class was no longer in a position to curb the growth and spread of recalcitrant movements.<sup>139</sup>

There were many other common points for bringing the Sufis and the *jogis* closer. The *jogis*, without considering details, accepted the authority of the Vedas, and accepted the six schools of Hindu philosophy including the Vedanta philosophy, and considered the nominal world to be *maya*, not real. In spite of this, their object was *not* union with the Supreme Reality, but freedom from time and space and subsistence of the soul as a distinct entity, while conscious of the perpetual and all-embracing nature of the Brahma.<sup>140</sup> As Islamic thinking stressed the basic *difference* between the God and His created beings, and the Sufis, even while supporting the concept of *tauhid* couldn't go against it, there were many points of agreement between the Sufi concept and the notions of the *jogis*. Thus, the *Siddha Siddhant Paddhati* of Hatha Yogis demonstrated the relationship between *advaita* (non-dualism) and *dvaita* (dualism) by using the similarity of water and the bubble which was also used in the *wahdat ul-wujud* concept preferred by the Sufis.<sup>141</sup>

The thirteenth century also saw the development of a class of wandering dervishes variously known as Qalandars, Haydaries and Jawaliqis. They originated mainly in Iran, Syria and Anatolia, but from the thirteenth century onwards they spread throughout the Northern India. They ate Indian hemp and shaved their heads, eyebrows, beards and whiskers.<sup>142</sup> Some of their habits and customs were alike with that of the contemporary yogis. The amazing acts they performed, e.g. walking on burning charcoals or breaking a wall with a single blow, struck awe in the people with whom they mixed.<sup>143</sup> They considered *khanqah* life to be disgusting and appalling, and advocated that a

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, *Islamic Proselytisation*, p. 26.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

true mystic should lead a carefree life.<sup>144</sup> Even though they were Muslims, they didn't stick to the laws of *Shariat*, paid no attention to the prayers, and indulged chiefly in performing group-music and singing. Their presence in villages and urban centres couldn't fail to stimulate interest among the Hindus, and their influence may have converted a number of Hindus to the amalgamated form of Islam which they professed.

A noticeable point here is that the part played by the *jogis* in establishing close understanding between Hinduism and Islam should not be over-estimated. The *jogis* themselves were recluses, following a difficult and obscure path which could hardly be followed by the ordinary house-holder. Besides this the Brahmans continued to govern the routine rituals and functions. They also executed the task of education and diffusion of knowledge and culture. That's why they continued to have significant influence and hold on the masses.<sup>145</sup>

## 1.7 PROSELYTISATION ACTIVITIES IN PUNJAB, KASHMIR AND BENGAL

We have discussed the process of mass-conversion in the Punjab region. This development was profusely aided by the charismatic personalities of the early Sufis of that area. Due to their effect, the area west to the river Ravi formed the bulk of the Muslim population, most of them were the various Jat clan converts.<sup>146</sup>

As we have seen, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna had compulsorily converted some inhabitants of the southern part of the Kashmir valley. From the tenth to the fourteenth century, Muslim émigré soldiers-of-fortune and merchants formed a core of Muslim settlers there. One such fortune-hunter was Shah Mir who arrived in the valley in 1313 and founded the Shah Mir dynasty

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Satish Chandra, op. cit., pp. 152-53.

<sup>146</sup> R.M.Eaton, Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, New Delhi, 1994, p. 118.

in 1339.<sup>147</sup> He established amiable relations with the Brahman chiefs, even going to the extent of marrying them to his daughters, a practise unknown elsewhere in India.<sup>148</sup> A Suharvardi Sufi, **Saiyyid Sharaf ud-Din** whom Kashmiris remember as Bulbul Shah, converted Shah Mir's Buddhist ancestor, Rinchan to Islam. It was the speedy Islamisation of Buddhists in Iran during the reign of Ilkhanid Mahmud Ghazan (1295-1304) that impelled Rinchana to change his religion.<sup>149</sup>

While Bulbul Shah's *khanqah* attracted many Kashmiris, it was **Mir Saiyyid Ali Hamadani** who left a truly ineffaceable mark on them. After two of his cousins had made an investigative survey, the Saiyyid himself reached Srinagar in about 1381 during the rule of Sultan Qutb ud-Din (1363-89).<sup>150</sup> The Saiyyid and his supporters razed some temples and forcibly converted Brahmans to Islam. By demolishing Hindu temples in Kashmir, the Saiyyid and his followers "seem to have found new avenues for promoting their commercial interests, and [also enriched]... themselves and their local followers."<sup>151</sup> The Sultan didn't wish to isolate the immigrants from Iran and so extended him the necessary help to settle down but nothing else. After a stay of about three years, Saiyyid Ali left Srinagar a discouraged man, dying during his sojourns in 1385.<sup>152</sup>

The advent of Saiyyid Ali's son, **Mir Muhammad** in 1393, rejuvenated the evangelical spirit of the earlier Irani settlers. Sultan Sikandar (1389-1413) became a devotee of the young migrant and built a *khanqah* on the site where his father had first raised a prayer platform. One of his powerful and prominent Brahman nobles, Suha Bhatta, became Mir Muhammad's follower, embraced

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<sup>147</sup> Islamic Proselytisation, p. 28.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

Saif ud-Din as his Muslim name, and wedded his daughter to his young master.<sup>153</sup>

Under the encouragement of Mir and Suha, Sikandar razed ancient temples in Pompur, Vijabror, Martand, Anantnag, Sopor and Baramula. Many puritanical and inequitable laws were imposed and *Jizyah* was levied for the first time in Kashmir. The harassment of Brahmans and their segregation from the top echelons of administration and replacement by Irani emigrants, speeded up the process of conversion of the Brahman elite, who were reluctant to forsake the superior position they so far held in the government. However in a short time Sultan Sikandar tired of his discriminatory policy, and, as stated by the Brahman historian Jonaraja, 'fixed with some difficulty a limit to the advance of the great sea of the *Yavans* (Muslims)' and removed *turushkadanda* (*Jizyah*). This change in the stance of the state seems to have so dissatisfied Mir Muhammad that, after a stay of twelve years, he, like his father, left Kashmir.<sup>154</sup>

In addition to conversion, the Irani migrants Persianised the administrative scaffold, thus plummeting the significance of Sanskrit and leading to a subsequent decrease in Brahman influence. On the other hand, the new Sufi migrants from Transoxiana and Iran together with the Kashmiri Sufis, proved a serious confront to the impact of the Sufi followers of Mir Saiyyid Ali and his son. Among the aboriginal Sufis were the Rishis. This Sufi order, ensuing from the cross-fertilisation of Sufi beliefs with those articulated by the Shaivite yogini, Lalla Yogishwari, was established by **Shaikh Nur ud-Din Wali** (1378-1439). According to Jonaraja, the Shaikh was the greatest saint of his time.<sup>155</sup> His teachings are personified in his Kashmiri verses, some of which are almost the same to those expressed by Lalla. A century afterwards, many Rishis, too, began to live in *khanqahs*, accepting land grants and money from their followers and from the government. Nonetheless, they remained

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., pp. 29-30.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

committed to the commoners, regardless of class and religious differences. The Rishi influence seems to have encouraged many poor and ignored Hindus to embrace Islam.<sup>156</sup>

Like the conversion of tribal groups in western Punjab, Northwest Frontier region, Sind and Baluchistan, tribal chiefs were also converted by Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji, who conquered Bihar and Bengal. One of the tribal chiefs known to have been proselytised to Islam by him was the head of the Mej or Meg tribe of Assam. This conversion happened soon after Bakhtiyar's conquest of Nadia, the capital of Lakshman Sen, in 1204.<sup>157</sup>

**Shaikh Jalal ud-Din Tabrezi**, an illustrious Suharwardi Sufi, was a colleague of Shaikh Baha ud-Din Zakariya (b. about 1182-83, d. 1262). Shaikh Jalal wasn't successful in Delhi or Badaun, but very successful in Bengal where he enrolled many followers. He first settled at Lakhnauti, where he built a *khanqah* with a *langar* (centre for free distribution of food) attached to it. Later he moved to Devatalla (Deva Mahal) near Pandua in northern Bengal. There he destroyed a Hindu or Buddhist temple and converted a large number of unbelievers.<sup>158</sup> In spite of this, the Shaikh's remembrance was cherished by Hindus and Muslims alike. Devatalla came to be known as Tabrezabad and drew a large number of pilgrims.<sup>159</sup>

The fourteenth century saw an important warrior-saint in Bengal who appears to have made many conversions in Sylhet. He was **Shaikh Jalal Mujarrad**. He was a Turkistani by birth and persuaded the model of militant evangelism reinstated to by some Sufis in that area. Though not supported by Indian histories, it is likely that the Shaikh and his adherents ransacked Hindu villages on the way to Bengal and by force converted some Hindus to Islam. Until then, Sylhet had been subjugated by Shams ud-Din Firuz (1301-22), the

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

enterprising governor of Bengal and Shaikh Jalal and his devotees found the area potential for aggressive evangelism. In 1345, Ibn Battuta went to see Shaikh Jalal in a cave at Sylhet. Up till now the Shaikh's popularity had spread from the Islamic world to China. Ibn Battuta was daunted with the Shaikh's strictness and the magic encircling his name. His extraordinary powers with the aggressiveness of his followers seem to have attained converts to a great extent.<sup>160</sup>

Shaikh Jalal's enterprising choice of Sylhet for his mystical endeavours is similar with that of **Shaikh Badr ud-Din** or Pir Badr i-Alam's selection of Chittagong. The Shaikh was a historical personality like Shaikh Jalal but myths and legends have surrounded him so much that the facts are a few and legends many.<sup>161</sup> It appears that his forefathers had settled in Meerut. Around 1381, at the invitation of Shaikh Sharaf ud-Din Yahya Maneri (b. 1263, d. 1381), the famous saint of the Firdawsiya *silsilah*, Pir Badr i-Alam went to Bihar, but prior to his reaching the province, the great Shaikh had died. He wedded into a Bihari Hindu family before starting out for Sunargaon and Chittagong in East Bengal. Chittagong was subjugated about the middle of the fourteenth century by Fakhr ud-Din Mubarak Shah (1338-50), but was supposed to be haunted by evil spirits, so the Shaikh's decision to settle there was considered daring as well as thrilling. The predominantly Buddhist as well as hostile Hindus of the Chittagong and Arakan regions were highly impressed by Shaikh's stay in the inhospitable surroundings.<sup>162</sup> At last, Pir Badr left East Bengal for Maner in Bihar where he settled down and established friendly relations with the Sharqi dynasty of Jaunpur. He died there in December 1440.<sup>163</sup> The places related to Pir Badr's visit in Chittagong continued to be revered by both the Buddhist and the

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<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*; A History of Sufism in India, I, p. 316.

<sup>163</sup> A History of Sufism in India, I, p. 317.



Hindu Maghs settled in the region. Caretakers of these holy centres were significant means in the process of Islamisation.<sup>164</sup>

Some Bengali customs give Pir Badr the fifth position in the group of legendary Panch Pir or five pirs. "The four others were Ghazi Miyan (Salar Masud), Zinda Ghazi, Shaikh Farid, and Khwaja Khizr, and all were worshipped by both Hindus and Muslims."<sup>165</sup> The Panch Pir are the equivalents of the Buddhist Panch Tathagatas and the Panch Pandits of the Nath Yogis. The Badr Maqam of Arakan is a place of reverence for Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims equally.<sup>166</sup> The synthesised observances of Sufis in East Bengal, together with political and economic pressure from the rulers, was the chief cause in the Islamisation of this region, which now caters a vast Muslim population.<sup>167</sup>

## 1.8 ATTITUDE OF STATE TOWARDS PROSELYTISATION

The early Islamic state, established after the rightly guided caliphate (*khilafat i-rashidun*), being a secular institution, paid no or almost very little attention towards conversion of non-believers into the fold of Islam. "Since conversion to Islam meant loss of *Jizyah* on the one hand and additional expenditure in the form of pensions etc. on the other, the Umayyads discouraged conversions. If anyone got converted in spite of this discouragement, the Umayyad government declined to exempt him from the payment of *Jizyah* and refused to enlist him as state-pensioner. Hajjaj forced most of the *Mawali* in the great cities of Iraq to pay all those taxes which they had been paying before their conversion to Islam."<sup>168</sup>

<sup>164</sup> Islamic Proselytisation, p. 27.

<sup>165</sup> A History of Sufism in India, I, p. 317.

<sup>166</sup> Islamic Proselytisation, p. 28.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> K.A. Nizami, Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India, p. 328.

In India the situation was not very much different. Muhammad bin Qasim's invitation to the Sind tribal chiefs to accept Islam appears to have experienced some success. The people of Sind were asked to adopt Islam and assurance was granted to them that they would, on doing this, have the same privileges as Arab Muslims. Jai Sinha, the son of Raja Dahir of Sind and other chiefs accepted Islam, but the former, in a little while renounced and revolted.<sup>169</sup> The Qaramita Ismailis of Multan and Mansura, no doubt, took an active participation in proselytisation. Sultan Mahmud's efforts to convert inhabitants of the Punjab region met with scanty success. But, his attempt to proselyte the people of Kashmir was almost a failure because the Hindus who adopted Islam owing to fear for their lives, re-embraced their ancestral faith once the threat of Ghaznavid invasion was over.<sup>170</sup> "The Gakkhars, a barbarous people in the mountainous district of the North of the Punjab, who gave the early invaders much trouble, are said to have been converted through the influence of Muhammad Ghori at the end of the twelfth century."<sup>171</sup>

Sultan Ala ud-Din Khalji also proselytized some of the tribal chiefs of the region he had subjugated. The most noteworthy of his converts were the Barwars of Baradu tribe who settled the area between Gujarat and Malwa. They were famous for their uncontrolled valour and military exploits. They had been private army of Rajput chieftains and rajas and it appears that they have accepted Islam, whether by force or not, so as to be able to continue as soldiers of fortune, this time in the cause of Islamic power.<sup>172</sup> But, despite exhibiting the proselytising zeal, Ala ud-Din negated the *ulema* to intervene in the formulation of the state policies.

Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq was, although, an open-minded ruler, he didn't hesitate to convert Hindus to Islam. His most trustworthy convert was

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<sup>169</sup> Islamic Proselytisation, p. 15.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>171</sup> T.W. Arnold, The Preaching of Islam, p. 258.

<sup>172</sup> Islamic Proselytisation, p. 18.

Qiwam ul-Mulk Maqbul, a noble from Warangal. The Sultan compulsorily proselytized to Islam the surviving offspring of the rulers and nobles of Kampili in the Deccan. Harihar and Bukka, the founders of the independent kingdom of Vijaynagar, were among converted members of the ruling dynasty.<sup>173</sup> But at the same time it is also true that this is the very Sultan who systematically tried to enrol Hindus into the central administrative mechanism, i.e. the nobility, so as to develop a homogeneous ruling class.

The regional dynasties of India during fifteenth century patronised the local culture and promoted cultural assimilation at the higher level, but on the other hand, packed down the independence of a large number of Hindu chieftains within their territory and converted some of them in the mode of earlier Delhi Sultans. Even under the liberal Husain Shahi rulers (1494-1538) of Bengal, Hindus adopted Islam with the intention of entering government services.<sup>174</sup> Although this was not a new practise; as we have seen, during the reign of Sultan Sikandar Shah of Kashmir (1389-1413), the Brahman nobility who were reluctant to abandon their hitherto held superior position in the administrative mechanism, converted to Islam.

We can sum up this discussion in the words of Dr. S.A.A. Rizvi that, "The available evidence of Islamic proselytisation from the tenth to the fourteenth century tends to indicate that the Delhi Sultans and their governors converted tribal chiefs and the rulers of tribal regions in order to establish Islamic outposts in the border areas and other strategic regions. This policy was not very successful because most of their converts apostatised. However, some were prompted by the political and economic advantages to be gained to continue in their new faith and some may also have found some spiritual satisfaction in Islam. People who embraced Islam because of the influence of

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

their leaders continued in their new faith, for expiation was exceedingly difficult for them."<sup>175</sup>

## 1.9 JAINISM DURING THE SULTANATE PERIOD

Islam and Jainism familiarised with each other following the Islamic conquest of Central Asia and Persia beginning in the seventh century to the twelfth century, when much of north and central India came under the rule of the Delhi Sultanate. As mentioned above, the Sufi writers mention the Buddhist *shramans*, the Jain *yatis*, the Hindu *siddha* and yogis undiscernibly as *jogis*. This shows the indistinct acquaintance of Jainism by an important section of Islam, i.e., the Sufis.

Samarasinha or popularly known as Samara Shah, was an influential Jain merchant of Gujarat during the fourteenth century. The work *Nabhinandanoddhara-prabandha*, written by his *guru* Kakka Suri, shows that Alp Khan, the governor of Gujarat during Ala ud-Din Khilji's reign, was a friend and well-wisher of Samara Shah, the former allowed Samara Shah through a *farman* to rebuild the famous temple of Adinatha at Palitana.<sup>176</sup> Kakka Suri informs us that Qutb ud-Din Mubarak Shah (r. 1316-1320) had invited Samara Shah to Delhi in 1320.<sup>177</sup> On the testimony of the work *Nabhinandanoddhara-prabandha*, it is known that Samara Shah was in the good books of Sultan Ghiyas ud-Din Tughlaq (r. 1320-1325), his exact contemporary. Samara was made the governor of Telang and built many Jain temples at Urangapura.<sup>178</sup> And it proves that even though a devoted Jain, Samara Shah was able to maintain good relations with contemporary Muslim rulers.

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., pp. 19-20.

<sup>176</sup> Asim Kumar Chatterjee, *A Comprehensive History of Jainism*, vol. II, Calcutta, 1984, p. 156.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

Ala ud-Din Khilji recruited Thakkur Pheru a Shrimal Jain from Kannana in Gujarat as a treasurer. He was an expert in coins, metals and gems. For the benefit of his son Hemapal, he wrote several books on related subjects including *Dravya Prariksha* on metals and various coins; and *Ratna Pariksha* on various precious gems stones.<sup>179</sup> He was continuously employed until the rule of Ghiyas ud-Din Tughluq.

Jinaprabha Suri (d. 1333) wrote in his book *Vividhatirthakalpa* (Guide to Various Pilgrimage Places) of his relationship with Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq (r. 1325-1351). In two chapters that discuss his relationship with the Sultan (one of which was actually written by his disciple Vidyatilaka Suri), Jinaprabha travelled to Delhi to recover an image that had been taken from a temple in Hansi. After impressing the Sultan with his poetic flair and his thorough knowledge of the various religious and philosophical schools in India, the Sultan awarded him with some blankets and other gifts, which Jinaprabha reluctantly accepted. In the second chapter, Jinaprabha was called back to Delhi to settle some religious matters for the Sultan. He was greeted warmly by the Sultan and even introduced to the Sultan's mother. One of Sultan's chief ministers was ordered to wipe the mud from Jinaprabha's feet. After getting the image back from the Sultan's treasury, Jinaprabha was paraded around the town on an elephant as a display of his pre-eminence in debate. He accompanied the Sultan on his military campaigns and upon his return was awarded a quarter of town in Tughluqabad for the Jain community, including a hall for Jinaprabha to teach in. Amid great fanfare and celebration, the Jain community was depicted as prosperous and just as when the Hindus ruled and times were not so bad, the glorious Jinaprabha Suri taught all those who come

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<sup>179</sup> B.M. Chinatamani, Notices of thirteen MSS. in Prakrit with Special Reference to their Scientific and Technological Contents, 1971. Online Available: [http://www.new.dli.ernet.in/rawdataupload/upload/insa/INSA\\_1/20005b63\\_168.pdf](http://www.new.dli.ernet.in/rawdataupload/upload/insa/INSA_1/20005b63_168.pdf) (accessed 24 November 2011).

to him, even those of other faiths, and all rush to serve him.<sup>180</sup> Jinaprabha also secured edicts (*farmans*) to allow Jains to go on pilgrimage unharmed and untaxed.<sup>181</sup>

Gunabhadra, another Jain saint was on good terms with Muhammad bin Tughlaq who wanted to give him gold coins which the former refused.<sup>182</sup> His disciple was Munibhadra who wrote *Shantinatha-charita*. According to this book, Munibhadra was honoured by the Emperor Firoz Shah Tughlaq (r. 1351-1388).<sup>183</sup>

Under the leadership of Jinaprabha Suri and the Kharatara *gaccha*, the Jains would remain an economically powerful and culturally vibrant community. While temples were desecrated, Jinaprabha speaks of these incidents as due to the power of the Dark Age (Kali Yuga) in which such things are going to happen. He also speaks of these desecrations as opportunities to earn "endless merit" by restoring temples, which laymen did with enthusiasm.<sup>184</sup>

The book *Kharataragachha-brihad-gauravavali* (KB), originally written by Jinapala after 1248 and further added by some unknown authors up to 1336 is an extremely important Shvetambara historical work.<sup>185</sup> "This work not only throws a flood of light on the relationship of the well-known monks of this [Kharatara] *gachha* with contemporary rulers of Northern India, but also discloses the existence of a great number of Jain *tirthas* of Western and Central India."<sup>186</sup> According to it, Jinachandra III the head of the Kharatara *gachha*, succeeded in getting a *farman* from Qutb ud-Din Mubarak Shah in 1318, and visited the Jain *tirthas* of Rajasthan, Haryana and other parts of Northern

<sup>180</sup> See Phyllis Emily Granoff and Koichi Shinohara, *Speaking of Monks: Religious Biography in India and China*, Ontario, 1993.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> Asim Kumar Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158-59.

<sup>184</sup> See John Cort, 'The Jain Sacred Cosmos: Selections from a Medieval Pilgrimage Text', in Phyllis Granoff, ed., *The Clever Adulteress and Other Stories: A Treasury of Jain Literature*, Ontario, 1990.

<sup>185</sup> Asim Kumar Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

India.<sup>187</sup> We have previously seen that Qutb ud-Din Mubarak Shah was on friendly terms with Samara Shah, a prominent Jain merchant of Gujarat. "It appears from this text, that during this period, there was a very good number of devoted Jains in the Muslim capital [Delhi], where Jinachandra III stayed for a few months. Among the prominent Jains of Delhi, who were devotedly attached to this Kharatara guru, we may mention Thakkur Pheru..."<sup>188</sup>

Jinachandra III died in 1319 and was succeeded by Jinakushala Suri. The KB, gives the information that his followers at Delhi became successful in obtaining a *farman* from Sultan Ghiyas ud-Din Tughlaq in 1323.<sup>189</sup> The Sultan was also a patron of Samara Shah, as we have seen. This *farman* enabled Jinakaushala and his followers to visit the two great *tirthas* of Shatrunjaya and Urjayanta in Gujarat. Thakkur Pheru was once again among the Jain *shravakas* of Delhi who accompanied Jinakaushala.<sup>190</sup>

In 1324, Viradeva, a devotee of Jinakaushala Suri and a resident of Bhimapalli (10 miles from Patan), obtained a *farman* from Sultan Ghiyas ud-Din, enabling him to visit the Jain *tirthas* of Gujarat.<sup>191</sup>

The above discussion shows a pattern of amity, harmony and concord between Islam and Jainism during the fourteenth century. The Khaljis and the Tughlaqs were the patrons of both the Jain monks and merchants. The culmination of relationship between Jainism and Islam is evident in the construction of the Bhattaraka Temple dedicated to Lord Mahavira by Muhammad bin Tughlaq at Delhi. It was opened in 1332 for both the Shvetambara and Digambara sects of Jainism to offer their praying.<sup>192</sup> These relations further developed and took a definite shape under the Mughals especially during the reign of Akbar and Jahangir.

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., pp. 160-61.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE REVOLUTIONARY FIFTEENTH-SIXTEENTH CENTURIES: POPULAR FORMS OF SUFISM AND BHAKTI MOVEMENT AND THE AGE OF AKBAR**

The fifteenth century witnessed in northern India what can be best described as the growth of popular form of *Bhakti* movement and popular Sufism. Broadening of the interacting platform of the two major religious groups, viz. Hinduism and Islam was a logical outcome of this process. "Among the popular Sufis were those who generally developed no organized school of theory or praxis by way of a *silsilah*, often resided in comparatively remote rural cities (*qasba*) and villages, and lived and interacted with the people of the area by adopting their language, idiom and even customs."<sup>1</sup> The production of a large number of *masnavis* in Hindi and other regional languages by the Sufi poets also exhibits the popular form of Sufism which enhanced its admissibility among the Indian masses.

From the thirteenth century, Hindu mystic songs were recited at *sama* gatherings of the Sufis especially of the Chishtis. Many of the most talented musicians were newly converted Muslims, i.e. Shaikh Ahmad of Naharwala in Gujarat who gave expert interpretation of *Hindawi* ragas. He was said to have been a devotee of **Faqir Madhu**, the Imam of the Jami mosque in Ajmer who retained his ancestral name even after his conversion.<sup>2</sup>

The majority of the *Hindawi* songs recited at the *sama* gatherings held during the thirteenth century have been lost but a small number of verses credited to Shaikh Hamid ud-Din Nagauri and Baba Farid Ganj i-Shakar have subsisted. These songs were a spontaneous fruition of intense and personal

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<sup>1</sup> Satish Chandra, 'Interaction of Bhakti and Sufi Movements in South Asia', in *State, Pluralism and the Indian Historical Tradition*, New Delhi, 2008, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. I, New Delhi, 2003, p. 326.



connection of these great mystics with their environment. *Hindawi* was such a language in which it was convenient to express the emotions of a heart full of divine love. The use of *Hindawi* was most probably a noteworthy reason in the stimulation of Hindu interest in Sufism.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.1 THE MASNAVIS

It is evident that from the fourteenth century onwards, the Sufi poets who chose Indian (i.e. Hindu) themes and wrote *masnavis* in Hindi and other regional languages to express their lyrical competence were impelled to do so because such themes offered a wide prospect to communicate their ideology on mysticism. Indian imagery and symbols were not only novel but were artistic also. The success of Ziya Nakhshabi's<sup>4</sup> Persian work *Tuti Namah* (Stories from a Parrot) was a further incentive for them. This book is a Persian version of the Sanskrit work *Shuka-Saptati* of Chintamani Bhatta. The original seventy stories in the Sanskrit work were reduced to fifty two in Nakhshabi's version and it contained a large number of Hindi words. The work which Nakhshabi wrote on sex and copulation is *Lazzat un-Nisa* (Sex Enjoyments) which is based on the Sanskrit work *Rati Rahasya* (Mysteries of Passion) written by Koka Pandit or Kukkoka. He flourished somewhere eleventh or twelfth century. The work demonstrates an innate effect of Hindu view of desire, passion and lovemaking or *Kama*. It included a belief in educating sex rather than showing some sort of shyness towards it.<sup>5</sup>

"Thus, we can presume that by this time (c. 1350) a small but knowledgeable set of people, familiar both with Sanskrit and Persian, and with basic religious ideas of Hindus and Muslims, had come into being. This was the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 327.

<sup>4</sup> He was a disciple of Shaikh Farid. S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 131.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 132-33. See also Satish Chandra, 'Historical Background to the Rise of the Bhakti Movement in Northern India', in *Essays on Medieval Indian History*, New Delhi, 2003, p. 298, fn. 23.

background which led to the production during the fourteenth, fifteenth and subsequent centuries of a large number of works in Hindi, using popular stories, legends or fables, combining them with Sufi mysticism on the one hand, and with Hindu mythology and philosophy on the other.”<sup>6</sup>

The earliest known of these works is *Chandayan*, the *masnavi* written in Hindi by Maulana Daud, popularly known as Mulla Daud. He belonged to Dalmau in the Rae Bareilly district, near Lucknow. The work was started in 1370-71 and completed in 1379-80.<sup>7</sup> The story is based on a Dalmau folk story. The heroine of the *masnavi* is Chanda and the male lead is Laurik Vir. The most captivating portions of the book are the *nakh-shikh* (from top to toe) description of Chanda given by the author. In it, Chanda symbolises the Supreme Being. As she walks, men level to the ground themselves before her only to find their sins washed away. Rishis and gods, i.e. Indra, Brahma, Vishnu, Murari and Gandharvas are mesmerized by her.<sup>8</sup>

The *nakh-shikh varnan* (description from the top to toe) of *Chandayan* made a deep impression on the later Hindi *masnavi* writers. These descriptions were reproduced mainly owing to the great reputation of Mulla Daud as a mystic. Badauni states, “There is no need for me to praise it [*Chandayan*] because of its great fame in that country and Makhdum Shaikh Taqi ud-Din Waiz Rabbani [a Godly preacher] used to read some [of its verses] from the pulpit... when certain learned men of that time asked the Shaikh saying what is the reason for this Hindi *masnavi* being selected [for his discourses]? He answered, the whole of it is divine truth and pleasing in subject, worthy of the ecstatic contemplation of devout lovers, and conformable to the interpretation of some of the *Ayats* (verses) of the Quran... Moreover by its public recitation human hearts are taken captive [even now].”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 298.

<sup>7</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 364.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 364-65.

<sup>9</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. G.S.A. Ranking, I, p. 333.

Similar to the story of *Chandayan* is that of *Mrigawati* which is also based on a local folk tale; authored by Shaikh Qutb Ali Qutban. It revolves around the Elysian beauty Mrigawati and its male protagonist is Raj Kunwar. In accordance with the ideas of Sufism, Mrigawati is the reflection of Eternal Beauty and the symbol of divine. A bona fide perception of this Beauty is possible only through self annihilation and the ability to see the beloved through love. Most importantly, love is the personification of pain and suffering and those who seek an eternity of happiness in love are stupid.<sup>10</sup>

Similar to other Sufi writers, Qutban portrays the Essence as Light and employing Hindu terminology, he calls Him *Niranjan*, *Kartar*, *Vidhata*, *Parameshwar*, *Ek-Onkar*, *Alakh* etc. Defining Muhammad as the cause of creation, he resorts to the concept of Shiva and Shakti as two bodies.<sup>11</sup> In Nath terminology the Absolute Being is denoted as Shiva and His Unique Power is called Shakti. There is no difference between them, Shiva is the father of the universe and Shakti is the mother.<sup>12</sup>

Qutban's benefactor was Sultan Husain Shah Sharqi of Jaunpur. He believed him to be a great and kind sovereign, and a wise and educated person. Shaikh Qutb Ali completed his *masnavi* in June-July 1503, working on it just over a period of two months.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike *Chandayan* or *Mrigawati*, the narrative of *Padmavat* by Malik Muhammad Jaisi is "a tale founded on the historical siege and capture of the virgin city of Chittor by Ala ud-Din Khilji in A.D. 1303"<sup>14</sup> who attacked Chittor after hearing of the beauty of Queen Padmini, the wife of King Ratan Singh. In the traditional Sufi style, the work commences with an invocation to God, Prophet Muhammad and his companions, afterwards it mentions Sher Shah

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<sup>10</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 366.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 366-67.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 334.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 367.

<sup>14</sup> G.A. Grierson, 'Vernacular Literature', in *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. II, pp. 430-31.

Suri (r. 1539-1545) as *Shah i-waqt* (the ruling monarch), next it introduces the author's *pirs* and finally asserts that the poet commenced the work in 1540-41.<sup>15</sup>

It was not only that Ratnasen (Ratan Singh) became a yogi in the search of Padmavati in this work which impelled Jaisi to describe Nath beliefs and practises but it also illustrates his own deep interest in Nath. The poet narrates a number of other situations which can only be meaningfully interpreted in the light of Nath and Sufi traditions and customs. One of such examples is the comparison of *Simhala-dvipa* with *Sumeru*, the mythical peak around which all the celestial bodies revolve.<sup>16</sup>

As his name suggests, Jaisi hailed from Jais, presently a city in the Rae Bareli district of Uttar Pradesh. He was also known as *Muhaqqiq i-Hind* (Researcher of Indian Truth). Born in 1494-95 he began to compose good poetry at the age of thirty. The works preceding his masterpiece the *Padmavat*, were *Akhiri Kalam* which he wrote during Babur's reign, and *Akhravat*. His other renderings in Hindi are *Kahranama*, *Chitrarekha*, *Maslanama*, *Holinama*, *Pustinama* and *Kanhavat*. Among these, *Kanhavat* deserves special mention. Probably it can be called the first poetry on Lord Krishna in Hindi. Prior to it, the Maithili poet Vidyapati wrote some verses about Krishna but many scholars consider the language of these stanzas as Avahatta, not Hindi.

According to *Maarij ul-Wilayat* of Abdullah Khweshgi Qasuri written in 1682-83, Jaisi lived until the reign of Akbar and it seems that he died sometime at the end of that period.<sup>17</sup>

Soon after the completion of *Padmavati*, *Madhumalti* of Shah Manjhan Shattari was written. This book has left a lasting impression both on Hindi poetry and the Sufi traditions. Manjhan's grandfather migrated from Balkh to India during the reign of Sultan Ibrahim Shah Sharqi of Jaunpur (r. 1402-1440) and settled at Lakhnauti in Bengal. Manjhan was born in 1515-16 and was

<sup>15</sup> A History of Sufism in India, I, p. 367.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 368.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 371.

educated in his grandfather's seminary at Lakhnauti. It was the training of Saiyid Taj ud-Din of Bukhara that made him both a Sufi and an *alim*. Saiyid Taj ud-Din introduced Manjhan to his spiritual mentor Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus, the writer of *Jawahar i-Khamsa*. Manjhan very deeply impresses the Shaikh with his clear understanding of this book.<sup>18</sup>

After occupying Raisen in 1543, Sher Shah Suri persuaded Manjhan to migrate there and to take up the post of Shaikh ul-Islam which he accepted but in 1553, he had to migrate to Sarangpur owing to the re-conquering of Raisen by the Rajputs. In due course, his Sarangpur seminary attracted a large number of scholars and the town began to compete with Shiraz as a renowned centre of learning.<sup>19</sup>

When Akbar visited Malwa in 1578, Shah Manjhan, in conjunction with other *alims*, also visited the emperor. Ghausi Shattari, author of the celebrated biographical dictionary of the saints *Gulzar i-Abrar*, on this occasion sat at Shah Manjhan's feet and became his life-long admirer.<sup>20</sup> Shah died in 1592-93.<sup>21</sup>

Manjhan completed *Madhumalti* at Raisen in 1545. Like other medieval *masnavi* writers he wrote a short panegyric on Islam Shah Sur (r. 1545-52), eulogizing his fearlessness and bounty. On the other hand, describing the saintly eminence, the austere exercises and the spiritual influence of his *pir* he becomes lyrical.<sup>22</sup>

The plot of *Madhumalti* is a traditional Indian fairy-tale. It is the romance of prince Manohar and princess Madhumalti. To Manjhan, the romance of Madhumalti symbolised divine love.<sup>23</sup> In the preface of the book, Manjhan very creatively restate the Sufi and the medieval *Bhakti* theory of the self-

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<sup>18</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. II, New Delhi, 2002, p. 434.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Gulzar i-Abrar*, Manchester MS, f. 239b, quoted by S.A.A. Rizvi, *op. cit.*, p. 435.

<sup>22</sup> Mataprasad Gupta, ed., *Madhumalti*, Allahabad, 1961, pp. 14-22.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 535.

manifestation of the Supreme Being.<sup>24</sup> Pursuing the Sufi approach, he emphasizes that in creating the world Lord's motive was His love for the Prophet Muhammad, and shows concern on the fact that even though His hidden form was universally known, His manifestation in the form of Muhammad was not sufficiently recognized. Underlying the importance of *vachan* (word), Manjhan tracks down its origin to the creative word (*kun*) of Allah and identifies it with *Onkar*.<sup>25</sup>

The tradition of writing Indian romances in Hindi by Sufi poets continued during the subsequent seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Such eminent poets during the seventeenth century were Usman and Shaikh Nabi. Qasim Shah and Nur Muhammad belonged to the eighteenth century.

The *Chitravali* written by Usman is a fairy story of princes Chitravali and prince Sujankumar. Usman was a contemporary of Jahangir and hailed from Ghazipur as he mentions it in the book.<sup>26</sup> His father was Shaikh Husain. Usman was a disciple of Haji Baba<sup>27</sup> who himself was a devotee of Shaikh Nizam ud-Din Auliya in succession. He composed the *Chitravali* in 1613 A.D. As was a common practise among Sufi writers, Usman started the book with an invocation to God, Prophet and the four Caliphs, followed by admiration of Badshah (i.e. Jahangir) and a mark of respect to Shaikh Nizam ud-Din and Haji Baba.<sup>28</sup>

The poet in the 'Section on the search of yogi' has described many places and countries, e.g. Kabul, Badakhshan, Khurasan, Russia, *Sham* (Syria), *Misir* (Egypt), *Istambul* (Constantinople), Gujarat, *Simhala-dvipa* (Sri Lanka) etc. What is the most striking is the arrival of yogis at the island of Englishmen.<sup>29</sup> It clearly

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-2.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 24-25.

<sup>26</sup> Acharya Ramchandra Shukla, *Hindi Sahitya Ka Itihas* [History of Hindi Literature], Allahabad, 2012, p. 70.

<sup>27</sup> Probably he was a local Sufi saint of Ghazipur. Shyam Manohar Pandey, *Madhyayugeen Premakhyan* [Medieval Romances], Allahabad, 2007, p. 108.

<sup>28</sup> Acharya Ramchandra Shukla, op. cit., p. 70.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

indicates the presence of the English at that time and probably is the first *masnavi* which mentions them.

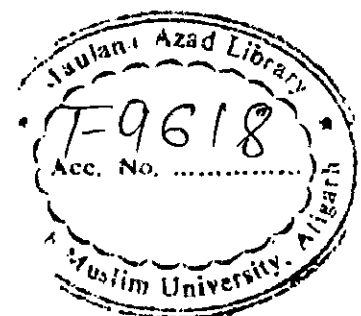
The poet not only portrays Sujankumar as a seeker and yogi but adhering to the legendary style he even states that Sujan was born from a part of the Supreme Yogi, i.e. Shiva.<sup>30</sup>

The *Gyandip* was written by Shaikh Nabi. He belonged to Aldemau, a place near Dospur in the Sultanpur district of modern Uttar Pradesh.<sup>31</sup> Like Usman, he was also a contemporaneous of King Jahangir. In 1614-15 he wrote this book<sup>32</sup> which is a story of King Gyandip and Queen Devjani (Devyani).<sup>33</sup>

The author of *Hans Jawahar*, Qasim Shah was a resident of Daryabad in the Bara Banki District of Uttar Pradesh. He was alive until 1731. *Hans Jawahar* is a tale of King Hans and Queen Jawahar. He has mentioned Muhammad Shah as *Shah i-waqt* (the reigning monarch)<sup>34</sup> which shows his simultaneity to this Mughal King.

Nur Muhammad the composer of *Indravati*, was a courtier of the Mughal King Muhammad Shah (r. 1719-48). He belonged to Sabrhad, situated at the border of Jaunpur-Azamgarh in the Jaunpur district of Uttar Pradesh.<sup>35</sup>

He was a scholar of Persian. His knowledge of Hindi as a language of poetry was exceeding to all other Sufi poets. Besides a *diwan* (collection of ghazals) and a book *Rauzat ul-Haqayaq*, he wrote many books in Persian all perished due to inattention.<sup>36</sup> In 1744 A.D. he completed a beautiful narrative poem *Indravati* which is a love story of Rajkunvar, the Prince of Kalinjar and



<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>31</sup> Shyam Manohar Pandey, op. cit., p. 109.

<sup>32</sup> A History of Sufism in India, I, p. 371.

<sup>33</sup> Acharya Ramchandra Shukla, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Indravati, the Princess of Agampur.<sup>37</sup> As per the tradition, Nur Muhammad praised Muhammad Shah as the reigning king.<sup>38</sup>

We can sum up the contribution of these romances in the words of Prof. Satish Chandra that, "While the poetical works of these Sufi saints do not show any deep knowledge of Hindu philosophy, they reflect popular attitudes and the extent to which mysticism, basing itself on carnal love, was providing a common platform for the followers of the two leading religions in the country, Hinduism and Islam."<sup>39</sup>

## 2.2 POPULAR MONOTHEISTIC MOVEMENTS

The adherents of the path of *bhakti* or loving devotion to God can broadly be divided into two categories—the *nirguna* or those who advocate devotion to a God devoid of any attribute, and the *saguna* whose centre of devotion are the incarnations of Vishnu—Rama and Krishna. Neither it is a rigid compartmentalisation nor are both these methods contrary to each other. The follower of the way of *nirguna* attributes to his adorable One, some qualities which are the features of *saguna* Brahma. Likewise, a *saguna bhakta* sees in his God certain traits which are the characteristic features of *nirguna* Brahma.<sup>40</sup>

The three most eminent figures of the *nirguna bhakti* movement during the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries in northern India are Kabir (1440-1518), Nanak (1469-1538) and Dadu Dayal (1544-1603) of whom, no doubt, Kabir has a towering personality and has a lasting effect on bringing the two communities, i.e. Hindus and Muslims closer to each other.

In the history of Indian religious practice, **Kabir** stands as a great thinker and talented poet who enlightened the path of Indian people and provided

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Satish Chandra, *Essays on Medieval Indian History*, p. 299.

<sup>40</sup> Nagendra, ed., *Hindi Sahitya Ka Itihas [History of Hindi Literature]*, Noida, 1998, pp. 114-19.



them a true leadership to a long time by crossing the limits of centuries. He was a primal figure in the sense that although he borrowed from Nath yogic ideology, Brahmanic Hinduism, Buddhist Tantrism and Islam (particularly Sufism) but he blended all these ideas in a way that it looked as if he "not only summed up all that had gone before him in the field of devotion in the region, but became virtually the starting point of a new trend of thinking."<sup>41</sup> This is evident from the fact that prior to him we find no trace of *bhakti* as a movement in North India. Kabir was not the founder of *nirguna bhakti* as such for he himself admitted in a verse that *bhakti* originated in the Dravida (i.e. South India) and brought to northern India by Ramanand,<sup>42</sup> he was the movement's earliest known exponent in medieval India, thus, became a starting point of the movement.

So far as the social implications of the teachings of Kabir are concerned, the upmost among them is his untiring humanism. It is evident in his persistent emphasis on human equality. He condemned all types of inequality based on caste, position, race, or wealth, and criticised the wealthy and the powerful for their pattern of life. To Kabir they were like animals who stuffed themselves for food, forgetting their human nature and so making their salvation difficult.<sup>43</sup> Even though not particularly expressed, Kabir's such condemnations were directed against Muslim state officers.<sup>44</sup> This tendency of disapproving of social inequality is largely absent in the writings of the Sufi poets of Hindi for whom God has created the rulers and the slaves, and the rich and the poor.<sup>45</sup> This type of acceptance was not for Kabir who pronounced the feelings of the poor and the oppressed. He wanted a qualitative change in their lives but suggested no way to do so. Whether or not this was a limitation of Kabir or of his age, as the

<sup>41</sup> Satish Chandra, *State, Pluralism and the Indian Historical Tradition*, p. 155.

<sup>42</sup> भक्ती द्राविड़ ऊपजी, लाये रामानन्द,  
परगत किया कबीर ने, सप्तद्वीप नव-खंड।

<sup>43</sup> M.A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, vol. VI, Oxford, 1909, p. 253.

<sup>44</sup> *A History of Sufism in India*, I, p. 381.

<sup>45</sup> Padmavat, ed., V.S. Agrawal, Jhansi, 1955, No. 3.

different forms of exploitation were not fully known and to expect from him any kind of 'revolutionary vision' to solve these problems would be an injustice to him.

The second social aspect of Kabir's teachings is his rejection of the ritualistic and ceremonial elements of both the religions, Hinduism and Islam. He refused the superiority of the Brahmans, showed disrespect to them for their hypocrisy and pride and strongly denounced idol-worship, asceticism, fasting, bathing in rivers without a personal devotion to God. His criticism of emphasizing on the external aspects of religion was not restricted to the Brahmans, but was extended to qazis, mullas and Shaikhs for their meaningless insistence on *roza*, *namaz*, *haj* etc.<sup>46</sup> To him, these formulaic aspects were the chief hindrance for both the communities in coming closer to each other.

Third social aspect of Kabir's ideas is his opposition of reliance solely on religious authority and revealed scriptures—*tu kahta kagad ki lekhi main kahta aankhin ki dekhi* (you only say whatever is written in the scriptures, whereas I say only what I have experienced). According to him, *jnana* (knowledge) and *bhakti* complemented each other, but *jnana* was a spiritual experience not to be acquired through books. To Kabir, the Vedas and the Gayatris helped their readers forget God and he argued that he himself had been saved through the constant repetition of God's name;<sup>47</sup> the One God whom he ascertained as Rama, Hari, Govind, Allah, Khuda, Sahab etc.

In so far as the relevance and the legacy of Kabir are concerned, "Kabir's was the first attempt to reconcile Hinduism and Islam..."<sup>48</sup> He did so by establishing his own path of love and devotion to God which could be followed by everyone no matter what religion they follow. Dr. Hazariprasad Dvivedi, a modern Hindi critic, in his book *Kabir*, assesses his contribution in harmonizing Hinduism and Islam as, "He [Kabir] was not one who harmonized [the Hindu

<sup>46</sup> Savitri Chandra, *Social Life and Concepts in Medieval Hindi Bhakti Poetry*, Delhi, 1983, pp. 47-61.

<sup>47</sup> Macauliffe, VI, p. 242.

<sup>48</sup> Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, Allahabad, 1963, pp. 150, 165.

and Muslim religions] by bowing down to both. He was a revolutionary who destroyed all the snares of external *aachar* [customs] and bad concepts. Compromise was not his path. The ability to reject such big snares cannot be found in an ordinary man... Someone who does not have unbroken confidence in his own mission cannot be so remarkably resolute."<sup>49</sup>

Dr. Dvivedi goes on to say, "Kabir, then, having rejected all external *aachar* [customs], carried out a religious practice that seated man on the throne of common man and God on the throne of impartial God... Having cut the net of the many particular characteristics related to caste, family, religion, concepts, beliefs, scriptures, and communities, that throne can be prepared where one man can meet another according to their natural human capacities. As long as this does not happen there will be a lack of peace, there will be struggle, there will be violent rivalry. Kabir Das sowed the seed of this great religious practice."<sup>50</sup>

Unlike Kabir and Dadu who were absolutely monotheist, Nanak is of the philosophy of 'Difference and Non-Difference' [Sanskrit, *Bhedabhed*].<sup>51</sup> Kabir and the followers of monotheism in his tradition claim that individual self is completely identical to *Brahma*. Contrary to this notion, Nanak and his followers claim that the individual self (*jivatma*) is both different and not different from the ultimate reality known as *Brahma*, thus denoting a relation of greater-lesser between them. This is evident that Guru Nanak accepted the caste system in a way of resignation to the divine will but criticized the social preconceptions of high and low castes trusting that only those will achieve salvation who believe themselves *nich* (low) before God.<sup>52</sup>

But, this philosophical notion doesn't diminish at all Nanak's status as a *nirguna bhakta*. Although he was a monotheist, it was not the Unity of God, but

<sup>49</sup> Hazariprasad Dvivedi, 'Kabir's Place in Indian Religious Practice', tr. from Hindi by David N. Lorenzen, in David N. Lorenzen, ed., *Religious Movements in South Asia 600-1800*, New Delhi, 2004, p. 285.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp. 285-86.

<sup>51</sup> Nagendra, ed., op. cit., p. 124.

<sup>52</sup> A History of Sufism in India, I, p. 394.

the Unity of Being (*Wahdat ul-Wujud* of Sufism) his chief interest.<sup>53</sup> The Absolute of Nanak's teaching is *Ek-Onkar* (The One Indivisible Absolute Being). He is beyond time (*akal*), is unborn, is eternally unchanging formless one (*nirankar*), inscrutable (*agam*), boundless (*apar*) and named *Par-Brahma* (Transcendent).<sup>54</sup>

Of all the monotheistic saints, Nanak was inspired the most by Islamic as well as Sufi ideology. Not surprisingly, for the reason that the area of his preaching, the Punjab was the thoroughfare of communication with the Islamic world, as well as the meeting place of many Sufis right from the eleventh century. Amongst these, his debt to Shaikh Hamid ud-Din Nagauri and Baba Farid was the furthestmost.

Guru Nanak considered everything other than God to be untrue, similar to the ideology of Sufis. His poetry contains an exalted quality of devotion to the *nirguna* Brahma. Besides this, he had a sense of respect for other religious ideologies. Since he was a wandering dervish, he used to meet all kinds of saints following different religions and beliefs. For this reason, his ideology relating to society and religion is based on experience and harmonization. According to the type of the occasion and the nature of his audience, he selected traditional terms used by Hindus and Muslims to invoke God, e.g. Hari, Sahab, Rama, Khuda, Allah etc. According to Nanak, by the grace of God the perception of the essence is possible but this experience is not always expressible, it's quite inexplicable and indefinable.<sup>55</sup>

The Sufi construal of the divine will (*Riza*) and Guru Nanak's concept of *Hukam* (creative activity of the God) are interchangeable terms in some of the hymns of Guru Granth Sahab.<sup>56</sup> The teachings of Guru Nanak on *Hukam* put together all the important features of *Riza* found in the Sufi works.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 390.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 391.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 393.

"Guru Nanak's perception of *man* is based on the Sufi *qalb*, as opposed to a physical heart, and is therefore identical to that of the Naths and of Kabir... The *haumai* [ego, the sense of being I], in the sense used by Abu Yazid Bistami, is the main obstacle to man becoming a mirror in which God is reflected. Pride, anger, lust (*lobh*) and attachments are also great enemies but not to the same extent as *haumai*. *Maya*, in Kabir's terms, prevents the return of the soul to its 'home' and keeps it on the treadmill of transmigration. A *guru*, however, helps to overcome both *haumai* and *maya* and to dispel the darkness. In Guru Nanak's technical terminology, a *guru* is not a person but either God Himself, or His Voice and His Name personified."<sup>58</sup>

Nanak laid great emphasis on a strict ethical code. His teachings are marked by a practical approach towards the troubles of life. Like Kabir, he rejected asceticism and upheld living a normal life accompanied with piety and righteousness. He insisted on earning one's bread 'with the sweat of one's brow' and then sharing it with others. These teachings are identical to that of the great Chishti saints. The great Guru always laid emphasis on honest labour and denounced the *mullas*, *pirs* and yogis for their sustenance on charity. Thus, he advocated a way of self-respect for everyone emphasising on physical labour. Income earned from dishonest resources was the forbidden products of pork and beef to Muslims and Hindus respectively.<sup>59</sup>

To Nanak, learning the Vedas, the Puranas and the Quran was futile without understanding the truth contained in these scriptures. Similarly, Hindus and Muslims would attain no spiritual benefit from their purification rituals because the real impurity was greed, falsehood and shameful sensual passions and these can't be cleansed with any purification sacrament.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 393-94.

According to him, the real meaning of goodness was humbleness and service to others.<sup>60</sup>

A striking feature of Nanak's teaching is his urge in giving an equal status to women 'who were the mother of men'. This is a strain something missing in the giants of the *Bhakti* movement—Kabir and Tulsi. To Kabir, *nari ki jhain parat andha hot bhujang* (a snake becomes blind by mere a shadow of the women). And Tulsi considered *shudra ganvar dhol pashu nari, sakal tadna ke adhikari* (a Shudra, an uneducated/coarse one, a drum, a beast and a woman they are all liable to admonition). This something regressive tone is missing in Nanak who shares a similar view with Dadu in this respect. Nanak also denounced the practice of *sati*. This is again contrary to the views of even Muslim writers of the medieval period; most prominent among them is Amir Khusraw who wrote:

Khusraw, in love rival the Hindu wife,

For the dead's sake she burns herself in life.<sup>61</sup>

Nanak opposed the formalism of both the religions, viz. Hinduism and Islam, and condemned idol-worship and the doctrine of incarnation. These were the two major points of dissimilarity between Islam and Hinduism. On the other hand, he supported the belief in the transmigration of the souls, something which criticized by the orthodox Sufis as *hulul*.<sup>62</sup>

**Dadu** was a monotheistic saint during the second half of the sixteenth century, thus, a contemporary of Mughal Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605). Spiritually, he was a descendant of Kabir.<sup>63</sup> He was a believer in an attribute-less God, formless and indescribable. No one who has gone to Him has returned (to tell about Him). He has neither any beginning nor end.<sup>64</sup> Comprehension of even a fraction (lit. word) of this formless Reality (Allah) is

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 394.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in A History of Sufism in India, I, p. 363.

<sup>62</sup> J.S. Grewal, Guru Nanak in History, Chandigarh, 1969, pp. 240-46.

<sup>63</sup> Parashuram Chaturvedi, ed., Dadudayal Granthavali, Varanasi, 1966, p. 12/verse 9.

<sup>64</sup> Swami Narayandas, ed., Dadu Vani, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Ajmer, 1969, 6/21.

to understand fully the essence of the knowledge contained in *Quran* and in other sacred scriptures.<sup>65</sup>

Dadu calls his path the path of *nipakh* or non-sectarianism. He says, "... leave aside the narrow limits (of sects, faiths etc.) and adopt fearlessly the path of non-sectarianism by rising above these limits. In this way he [Dadu] would associate himself to the one and only (God)."<sup>66</sup> Elaborating this point to make it clearer, Dadu asserts that he was neither a Hindu nor a Mussalman, nor could he be confined to any of the sects, but absorb himself only in God (*Rahman*).<sup>67</sup>

He also calls his path of *nipakh* as *madhya marg*, the middle path. It implied loving devotion (*bhakti*) to God while leading a normal family life,<sup>68</sup> as his predecessors Kabir and Nanak did. Although he was fully aware that such a non-sectarian path was difficult to traverse and that only a few can choose it. He says, "Everyone in this world is attached to one sect or the other, only the rare ones can rise above sect."<sup>69</sup>

Dadu was a stout believer in the equality of man, and a robust adversary of a society based on caste, or on superiority of race or family. He said, "Everyone (in the world) is part of the same Reality, and all have been created by the one God (*Sain*). But, they are given different terms (on the basis of caste, religion, family etc.) and become distinguished (from each other)."<sup>70</sup>

Underlying this fundamental human equality, Dadu harshly criticises the orthodox elements of both the communities, Hindus and Muslims.<sup>71</sup> For him the ordinary religious observances—*roza*, *namaz*, *tasbih*, temple-going etc. — were of no use and he deprecates all those, especially the Brahmans, the

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<sup>65</sup> Dadu Vani, 2/88.

<sup>66</sup> Dadu Vani, 16/10.

<sup>67</sup> Dadu Vani, 16/38.

<sup>68</sup> Dadu Vani, 16/28-32.

<sup>69</sup> Dadu Vani, 16/52.

<sup>70</sup> Dadu Vani, 13/116, 27/14, 29/21.

<sup>71</sup> Dadudayal Granthavali, pp. 23-24, p. 153/verses 43-44, p. 160/ verses 102-3, p. 459/ verse 3, couplet 2, p. 460/ verse 14, couplet 3.

Mullahs and the Shaikhs who supported this path as hypocrite.<sup>72</sup> A true Muslim or *mumin*, for Dadu, is one who honour and obey the one God, didn't cause pain to others, and behaved with truth and with a sense of self-contentment.<sup>73</sup> To him, Hindus and Muslims were the same *atma*. They were brothers, in actual fact, two hands, two feet, two eyes of the one body.<sup>74</sup>

In putting forward a society based on equality, Dadu was one of the rare who accorded women an equal and honourable status among men. For him, men and women are the same *atma*, and there should be no illusion, doubt or delusion in this matter.<sup>75</sup> In this regard, Dadu was like his predecessor Guru Nanak.

To which extent Dadu, in his socio-religious outlook, was affected by the ideals of the State is a debatable topic. Prof. Harbans Mukhia has argued that normally Dadu has accepted the ideals and institutions of the ruling class on the social level. He also accepted the class structure of the period. What he wanted only that different classes should perform their works with more integrity and readiness. His thinking is not of opposition, rather than of more and more indifference, the ideology of evading social conflicts.<sup>76</sup> Whereas, Savitri Chandra Shobha has made a case that "Dadu did not believe that the path of *nipakh* chosen by him could be or need be supported by royal authority. Like many Sufi saints, he considered that the state was to be shunned, since it upholds a society which was based on injustice and inequality, i.e. hierarchy. Dadu also postulates that the *sant* was a warrior in the case of truth, and for upholding it he only depended on Ram, not on any Rana or Rao, or Mir or Malik, or Pradhan or a Senapati. In fact, he should even be prepared to sacrifice

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<sup>72</sup> Dadu Vani, 16/38.

<sup>73</sup> Dadu Vani, 13/28-30.

<sup>74</sup> Dadu Vani, 29/5-7.

<sup>75</sup> Dadu Vani, 29/5.

<sup>76</sup> Harbans Mukhia, 'Bhakti Aandolan Ki Vichardhara: Dadudayal Ka Drishtikon', in *Madhyakalin Bharat: Naye Aayam*, New Delhi, 2001, p. 64.



his life for his cause."<sup>77</sup> But, she goes on to say that "Dadu's concept of non-sectarianism, and his distrust of the orthodox religious leaders of the two major communities, the Hindus and the Muslims, coincided with Akbar's own approach."<sup>78</sup> She concludes that "... during Akbar's reign, the concepts of *sulh i-kul*... and *nipakh* did not come into conflict, but in a large measure interacted with, and even supported each other."<sup>79</sup>

## 2.3 POPULAR SAGUNA BHAKTI MOVEMENTS

There were many factors responsible for the striking reappearance of popular *saguna bhakti* movements in the Indo-Gangetic plains from the fifteenth century onwards. These movements were more traditional in nature and for this reason stimulated less resentment from the orthodox Brahmans. Their appeal was particularly more rural as compared to the earlier monotheistic movement whose supporters were city-based artisans and traders. The revival of the self-confidence and prestige of the Brahmans who were main supporters of this *saguna bhakti* movement was consequential to the liberal outlook of Akbar who entered into a dialogue with them in his *Ibadatkhana* debates. Since they were on a marginalised position due to the popular monotheistic movement which denounced caste system, superiority of the Brahmans and infallibility of the scriptures, they supported the *saguna bhakti* movement and, thus, gave themselves again a centralised position in the Hindu society. It's not surprising that both Surdas and Tulsidas, central figures in the movement, were Brahmans. Also, crucial was the philosophical impact of the Vaishnavite teachers of South India—Ramanuja, Madhva, Nimbarka, and most importantly of Vallabhacharya who all fiercely opposed the non-dualistic (*advaita*)

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<sup>77</sup> Savitri Chandra Shobha, 'Akbar's Concept of *Sulh-i-Kul*, Tulsī's Concept of *Maryada* and Dadu's concept of *Nipakh*: A Comparative Study', in Iqtidar Alam Khan, ed., *Akbar and his age*, New Delhi, 1999, p. 28.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

philosophy of Shankaracharya and advocated loving devotion to an incarnated Vishnu having form (*sakara*) and attributes (*saguna*). Last but not least, the Sufi saints and poets, by their ceaseless insistence on the path of love, prepared the base for the growth of this mass Vaishnavite movement established itself on the doctrine of devotion (*bhakti*).

This Vaishnavite movement had two forms: one, dedicated to the worship of Lord Krishna and the second was the movement committed to the veneration of Lord Rama. The chief interpreter of this latter school of *bhakti* was Tulsidas, a contemporary of Mughal Emperor Akbar and the celebrated author of the epic *Ramcharitmanas* (holy lake of the deeds of Rama). According to tradition, he was born in 1532 and died in 1623. Tulsi lived and worked chiefly at Kashi (Varanasi).

The ideal of Tulsi is single-minded devotion and surrender of self (*ananya bhakti*) to Rama which is the means of obtaining salvation and emancipation (*mukti*) from the chain of births and deaths, a salvation which is as free and open to men of the lowest caste as to the Brahmins. Rama is portrayed as the ideal ruler who is also called *gharib-niwaz* (benefactor of the poor). He is *maryada purushottam* or the defender of propriety. At the social level, it implied upholding of the traditionally prescribed code of conduct between different members of the family; but, *maryada* above all implied the preservation of the four-fold division of the society.<sup>80</sup> This concept has to be seen together with his concept of *santulan* or equilibrium. It implied that the prescribed duties of different sections (*varnashram dharm*) in society should be maintained strictly. It also implied that the predominated wicked and evil sections should be kept under strict regulation.<sup>81</sup> Tulsi's concept of equilibrium depended on various sections of society performing their respective allotted

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<sup>80</sup> *Ramcharitmanas*, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, 1970, 7/20.

<sup>81</sup> Savitri Chandra Shobha, op. cit., p. 24.

duties and not discharging the duties fixed for others.<sup>82</sup> Tulsi considers it as *varnasankara* which in turn led to sorrow, fear, disease and deprivation.<sup>83</sup> Hence, social and political controls were necessary to maintain equilibrium and to prevent *varnasankara* and all its consequent evils.<sup>84</sup> Social control implied the maintenance of a reformed caste system based *not* on birth but on intrinsic qualities.<sup>85</sup> For this, the support of a discreet (*niti-nipuna*) ruler and high-minded (*saijan*) officials was necessary.<sup>86</sup>

Tulsi laid great emphasis on the need for social and political stability, only within this framework one can properly perform his religious duties, thus, prepared the ground for wider collaboration with the Mughal state. In turn, this was responded by the Mughal state which gave land grants to the foremost hubs of *bhakti* situated at Mathura, Vrindavan, and so on.<sup>87</sup>

Commenting upon a later development transforming Tulsi from a sensitive and humane poet to a bulwark of conservatism, Prof Satish Chandra says, "The Brahman successors of Tulsidas systematically emphasized the traditional and ritualistic aspects of Tulsi's teachings at the expense of his non-conformist and humanistic views, thus making him in course of time, a symbol of conservatism."<sup>88</sup>

The worship of Krishna advocated ecstasy by the means of *bhajan*, *kirtan*, etc. "in which the symbolism of sexual union was used to denote the ideal relationship between the God and the individual soul."<sup>89</sup> Because such a union accepted no limitations—whether of caste, race, status, even of religion, it prompted Muslim poets too, e.g. Raskhan and Abd ur-Rahim Khan i-Khanan to compose poems devoted to the love of Radha and Krishna. It is a remarkable

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>83</sup> Manas, 7/100.

<sup>84</sup> Savitri Chandra Shobha, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>85</sup> Manas, 7/20.

<sup>86</sup> Satish Chandra, Interaction of Bhakti and Sufi Movements in South Asia, p. 159.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Satish Chandra, Historical Background to the Rise of the Bhakti Movement in Northern India, p. 303.

<sup>89</sup> Interaction of Bhakti and Sufi Movements in South Asia, p. 159.

thing which is somewhat missing in the Rama cult where we find no Muslim poet praising him.

**Raskhan** (lit., the mine of *rasa*) or Saiyid Ibrahim as was his real name, can be placed among the most competent devotee poets like Sur and Tulsi. In his youth, he became a follower of Lord Krishna and initiated into the Vallabh sect by Goswami Vitthalnath and began living in Vrindavan and spent his whole life there. He himself mentioned in his book *Premvatika* his departure to Gokul leaving Delhi. His shrine is located in Gokul near the Yamuna river, Bhramand Ghat.

Raskhan could speak both Hindi and Persian; he translated the *Bhagavata Puran* into Persian. Four of his Hindi compositions are considered to be authentic—*Sujan Raskhan*, *Premvatika*, *Danlila*, and *Ashtayam*.<sup>90</sup> All these books are dedicated to Lord Krishna and his beloved Radha.

Raskhan got immense success and fame for his effectual portrayal of love, both in unison and separation. The love as depicted by him is vivid, subtle and comprehensive. The base of his unison love is Krishna. By describing the moods of Radha and other gopikas fascinated by the beauty of Krishna, Raskhan has pleasantly expressed the unison love. After it, the second most important *rasa* portrayed in his poetry is *Vatsala*. The description of the beauty of Krishna as a child is although expressed in a few verses, yet it is similar to that of Sur and Tulsi in its poetical dignity.

Composition of poetry was not neither ends for him nor the grandeur of his speech was to attain fame and riches. He envisaged himself meaningful in depicting the various *lilas* of Lord Krishna, the treasury house of divine and unending *rasa*. In one of his stanzas, Raskhan wishes that if he will have another birth, it should be in Gokul. No other poet, nor even a Hindu one, has expressed such a keen wish. Bharatendu Harishchandra, a modern Hindi poet

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<sup>90</sup> Nagendra, ed., op. cit., p. 237.

of nineteenth century has correctly remarked that all the Hindus should salute this Muslim Hindi poet.<sup>91</sup>

Abd ur-Rahim Khan i-Khanan (1556-1627) or popularly known as **Rahim** was the son of Bairam Khan, the *Ataliq* (Regent) of Mughal Emperor Akbar during 1556-60. Rahim was one of Akbar's main nine ministers (*Diwan*), also known as the *Navaratna* (the nine gems). He is most known for his Hindi couplets and his books on Astrology—*Khet Kautukam* and *Dwawishd Yogavali*.

Even though a Muslim by birth, Rahim was a devotee of Lord Krishna and wrote poetry, dedicated to him. Like Tulsi, he had an equal control on language. He chose three languages for poetic expression—Hindi, Sanskrit and Persian. In Hindi poetic language, he again used all its three forms—Brajhasha, Avadhi and Khari Boli. His couplets are written in Brajhasha, which are the major and popular aspect of his artistry. *Barvai Nayika Bhed*, his book is in elegant Avadhi. *Madanashtak*, another book is in Khari Boli. In addition, he had expressed himself in all the popular subjects of the time—*shringar* (love), *bhakti* (devotion), and *niti* (ethics). Through this approach "he is a representative poet of the racial life of Hindus and Muslims becoming homogeneous."<sup>92</sup>

Rahim also composed some Sanskrit *shlokas*.<sup>93</sup> His *Khet Kautukam* is a mixture of Sanskrit and Persian.<sup>94</sup> In the 34<sup>th</sup> year of Akbar's reign, i.e. 1589-90, he presented to the emperor a copy of his Persian translation of Babar's Memoirs (*Babarnamah*) which was originally in the Chaghtai Turkic. This shows his multifarious talent as a linguist.

<sup>91</sup> Quoted by Malik Mohamed, *The Foundations of the Composite Culture in India*, Delhi, 2007, p. 269.

<sup>92</sup> Ramswarup Chaturvedi, *Hindi Sahitya Aur Samvedna Ka Vikas* [Evolution of Hindi Literature and Ideology], Allahabad, 2010, p. 52.

<sup>93</sup> Acharya Ramchandra Shukla, op. cit., p. 148.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

Besides for his distiches, Rahim was also famous as a philanthropist. He was kind and considerate towards the needy. But, his bounty was a resultant of the true urge of the heart; it had nothing to do with the desire to get fame.<sup>95</sup>

## 2.4 THE AGE OF AKBAR: ERA OF MULTI-RELIGIOUS AND LATER SUPRA-RELIGIOUS EMPIRE

Like his grandfather Zaheer ud-Din Muhammad Babar, Akbar was primarily an empire-builder. "His ideal of the state in which all Indians irrespective of any religious distinction should participate as co-partners; his anxiety to build a nation on the basis of common political and economic interests; his breadth of vision which refused to accept any narrow or parochial divisions of society; his attempts to make the total Indian heritage available to his contemporaries through translation of Sanskrit classics—all these factors ushered in the dawn of a new era in the history of this country and fulfilled one of the crying needs of the hour and also set a pattern for present-day India."<sup>96</sup>

Various decisive factors were at work in moulding Akbar's mental make-up which can be broadly divided into two categories—hereditary influence, and contemporary religio-philosophic movements and thought-trends. As far as hereditary influences are concerned, in Akbar's personality they are visible as hereditary traits from Chengiz Khan to Humayun. Chengiz Khan was open-minded towards all faiths to allow Muslim, Christian, Taoist and Buddhist monks to continue their religious pursuits unhindered. Priests of all creeds were bestowed upon indemnity in taxes and for the success of the Mongols;

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>96</sup> K.A. Nizami, 'Naqshbandi Influence on Mughal Rulers and Politics', in *State and Culture in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 163-64.

they were expected to pray to God in their own way.<sup>97</sup> "The atavistic proclivity in Akbar's mind could never forget the position of *Alanqava*<sup>98</sup> (Mongols' claim of having super-natural origin) in Mongol legend. And, though opposed to respect for tradition in religious matters, Akbar meticulously guarded the Mongol tradition of his ancestors on which Abul Fazl expatiates. Whenever there was any need to combine spiritual and temporal functions, Abul Fazl, representing the view point of his master, drew inspiration from *Alanqava*."<sup>99</sup>

After that comes the inherited influence of Babur. "Babur was a true product of his Central Asian ancestors with all their virtues and vices—great and small—like his fore-fathers. In him, the intrepid spirit of a Mongol was softened by the mystic element of a Turk. In fact, the orthodox in him had as much play as the liberal... He felt it his duty to offer prayers and to visit shrines and tombs of saints. He observed the fast of Ramazan, distributed charity and offered the customary prayers, the Namaz. But, at the same time he drank wine though he knew it to be against the laws of Islam."<sup>100</sup>

Babur's concern for all types of men—classified on racial grounds, not on communal basis—is apparent in these lines: "The proper course for all who shelter under the shade of the royal benevolence, whether they be Turks, Tajik, Arab, Hindi or Farsi, peasants or soldiers, of every nation or tribe of the sons of Adam, is to strengthen themselves by the tenets of religion..."<sup>101</sup> Surely, this attitude paved the way for the evolution of *Sulh i-Kul* and *Tauhid i-Ilahi* under Akbar.

Babur's will to his son Humayun has been regarded as fallacious by some modern historians,<sup>102</sup> its considered material and historical value can't be

<sup>97</sup> K.A. Nizami, *Akbar and Religion*, Delhi, 1989, p. 6.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, see fn. 4.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>100</sup> M.L. Roy Choudhury, *The State and Religion in Mughal India*, Calcutta, c. 1951, p. 183.

<sup>101</sup> *Babur Nama*, tr. A.S. Beveridge, p. 554.

<sup>102</sup> Sri Ram Sharma, *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*, New Delhi, 1988, p. 9.

denied.<sup>103</sup> It is in accordance with the fundamental qualities of the character of Babur and his liberal and sympathetic attitude, as is evident in his *Memoirs*. He advised his son to follow a tolerant religious policy towards his entire subject and to keep in mind that as the health of human body depended upon the balance of humours, in the same way the health of the state depended on equitable and munificent treatment of various inhabiting communities.<sup>104</sup> Abul Fazl didn't refer to this will, perhaps by doing so it would have transferred the credit to Akbar's forefathers and not to Akbar, for commencing a tolerant policy in the Indian environment.<sup>105</sup>

In Humayun's personality, the Central Asian mystic elements of his ancestors and the liberal tendencies of his father were sufficiently mingled. "The mystic in Humayun urged him to regard himself as the fountain of all light and in pursuance of this, he used to cast a veil over his face, and when he removed it, the people used to say, 'Light has shone forth.' ... The early Turks believed that their *Khaqan* was an emanation from God... He [Humayun] was supposed to have received his inspiration from God (*Ilhamat i-Rabbani wa Waridat i-Subhani*). This association with God and representation of a great luminary was nothing unusual in the family of the Central Asian Turks."<sup>106</sup> As we shall see, this theory found its fullest manifestation in Akbar's concept of *Insan i-Kamil* (Perfect Man).

Humayun is reported to have given advice to Akbar that he should be sympathetic and thoughtful towards the Rajputs as loyalty and service was deep-rooted in their character and they were not given to transgression and disobedience.<sup>107</sup> This advice served as the foundation, says Farid Bhakkari, on

<sup>103</sup> Radhey Shyam, Babar, Patna, 1978, Appendix IV, pp. 487-94.

<sup>104</sup> For the full text of this will see K.A. Nizami, Akbar and Religion, Delhi, 1989, p. 13, fn. 1.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>106</sup> M.L. Roy Choudhury, The State and Religion in Mughal India, pp. 185-86.

<sup>107</sup> Farid Bhakkari, Shaikh, Dhakhirat ul-Khawanin, tr. Z.A. Desai, vol. I, Delhi, 1993, p. 74.



which Akbar later built the palace of his friendship with the Rajputs and it "became a subject of discussion for all, high and low."<sup>108</sup>

Humayun's tolerant policy towards Hinduism is evident in his grant of 300 acres of land in Mirzapur district in Uttar Pradesh for the maintenance of Jangamvadi Math of Banaras.<sup>109</sup>

The ill-treatment Humayun got from his own brothers made known to Akbar the fundamental flaw of blood-relationship in the issues of state and government. Besides this, "loyalty to the person of the king, irrespective of religious differences, had to be build up on sound foundations, if a stable political structure was to take shape in India."<sup>110</sup> We see Akbar resolving this problem later by initiating a multi-religious official bureaucratic system (the *mansabdari* system) and by his Divine Monotheism (*Tauhid i-Ilahi*).

It was difficult for Akbar to forget that he took birth in the fortress of a Hindu chief at the time when his co-religionists and kinsmen had made his father's life pitiable. Badauni says that from his youthful days, the Emperor (Akbar) had close companionship with the Hindus.<sup>111</sup> Conditions of early days moulded his outlook in the subsequent years and decided his basic ideals.

In this respect, Akbar's relations with the Chishtis and particularly with the Ajmer Shrine of Khwaja Muin ud-Din Chishti could be understood. According to Abul Fazl, the perfections and miracles of the Khwaja had been discussed frequently in Akbar's assemblies. It created in his heart a devotional attachment for the great saint, which resulted into a strong inclination to visit the Khwaja's shrine when in 1562, while on a hunting expedition, the Mughal Emperor at Midhakur (near Fatehpur Sikri) heard several minstrels singing captivating songs in praise of the great Khwaja. He was so moved that he

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Sri Ram Sharma, *Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*, p. 10.

<sup>110</sup> K.A. Nizami, *Akbar and Religion*, p. 17.

<sup>111</sup> *Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh*, tr. W.H. Lowe, II, p. 312.

immediately decided to go Ajmer on a pilgrimage.<sup>112</sup> On 14<sup>th</sup> January, 1562 he left for Ajmer with a few attendants,<sup>113</sup> thus, "opening a new chapter in the history of the [Ajmer] shrine, in the context of its relations with the Mughals, and its impact on the history of India."<sup>114</sup> A number of Akbar's initial moves of egalitarianism, viz. abolition of the practise of enslavement of war-captives (1562), remittance of the pilgrim tax on Hindus (1563) and a still more revolutionary step – the abolishing of *Jizyah* (1564) dates following this visit. On 20<sup>th</sup> January, 1570 Akbar started on foot from Agra to Ajmer as a means of fulfilment of vow and thanksgiving for the birth of Prince Sultan Salim<sup>115</sup> which happened on 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1569.<sup>116</sup> At Ajmer, Akbar settled a dispute over the superintendence of the shrine and after much investigation the charge of the shrine was taken over from Shaikh Husain, who claimed himself a descendant of Khwaja Muin ud-Din Chishti and was handed over to Shaikh Muhammad Bukhari.<sup>117</sup> On 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1570 Akbar again started from Agra to Ajmer for a thanksgiving pilgrimage<sup>118</sup> for the birth of Prince Shah Murad which took place on 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1570.<sup>119</sup> Because of the strategic importance of Ajmer as it was situated in the heart of Rajputana and would serve as a military base for maintaining effective control over the Rajput principalities and also for subjugating Gujarat which took place soon after, "an order was issued for repairing and enlarging the fort of Ajmer."<sup>120</sup> On 26<sup>th</sup> July, 1572 Akbar *en route* to conquer Gujarat, went to Ajmer and circumambulated the Khwaja's shrine.<sup>121</sup> The birth of Prince Sultan Danial took place in Ajmer on 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1572.<sup>122</sup> On 25<sup>th</sup> August, 1573 Akbar visited the shrine again *en route* to conquer Gujarat for

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<sup>112</sup> Akbarnama, tr. H. Beveridge, II, p. 237.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>114</sup> S.L.H. Moini, The Chishti Shrine of Ajmer: Pirs, Pilgrims, Practices, Jaipur, 2004, p. 18.

<sup>115</sup> Akbarnama, tr. H. Beveridge, II, p. 510.

<sup>116</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 502-3, fn. 2.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 511.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 516.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 514.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 516.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 539.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 542.

the second time.<sup>123</sup> On 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1573 he again paid his homage to Khwaja's shrine after settling the affairs of Gujarat.<sup>124</sup> As a means of invoking divine help to conquer Bengal and Bihar, on 8<sup>th</sup> February, 1574 Akbar proceeded to Ajmer to pay his devotion to the Khwaja<sup>125</sup> and after hearing the news of the victory of Bengal, he paid his thanksgiving homage.<sup>126</sup> Compelled by a spiritual urge, he again visited the *dargah* of Ajmer on 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1576.<sup>127</sup> Again, on 26<sup>th</sup> September, 1576 he performed the ceremonies of visiting the Khwaja's shrine.<sup>128</sup> In 1576-77, Akbar took Raja Man Singh, son of Bhagwan Das, within the shrine for the blessings of Khwaja for the success in his impending campaign against Kokanda and Kumbalmir.<sup>129</sup> Akbar's another visit to Ajmer was begun on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1577.<sup>130</sup> He subsequently visited there.<sup>131</sup> On 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1579 Akbar paid his visit to the shrine.<sup>132</sup> Thereafter he ceased to make his annual pilgrimage to Ajmer. On 30<sup>th</sup> July, 1580 prince Danial was given leave to depart to Ajmer as Akbar's representative.<sup>133</sup> Abul Fazl tries to explain Akbar's being desisted from going to Ajmer in person by telling that there are two kinds of religious worship. First is, good deeds and the second is ceremonials, the visiting of shrines etc. As Akbar was a sovereign he practised both but as at that time spiritual worshippers were on the increase, and also "there was no administrative work to be done in that quarter (Ajmer), and there were various things to be transacted at the capital," Akbar abstained from going to Ajmer in person.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Akbarnama, tr. H. Beveridge, III, p. 63.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., pp. 110-11.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>129</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, pp. 232-33.

<sup>130</sup> Akbarnama, tr. H. Beveridge, III, p. 298.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., pp. 303, 363.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. 405.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 464.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., pp. 462-63, see fn. 3.

Whatever be the reasons, one thing is for sure that Akbar was not a lay follower of Khwaja Ajmeri, he was a monarch and his emotional and spiritual needs were quite different from an ordinary devotee with an abounding political sense. As we have seen, Ajmer was important to Akbar for catering both his political ambitions and spiritual interests. Thus, for seventeen years (1562 to 1579) "the Emperor paid annual visits to Ajmer, and sometimes went twice or thrice a year, to implore the saint's spirit to bless him with further victories and sons, and to offer thanksgiving for his conquests and the fulfilment of his vows."<sup>135</sup> Until 1572, as we shall see further, most of the Rajput principalities with an exception of Mewar had been integrated into the Mughal Empire and till 1580 the Rajputs began to be associated with administrative responsibilities and, thus, from loyal subordinates they now become allies who contributed to the expansion of the empire. From 1580 onwards, they became partners of kingdom and sword-arm of the empire and formed a counterbalance in the nobility especially against the Turanis. This shows a decreasing strategic importance of Ajmer. Similarly, by 1572 Akbar's third son Darnal had been born and until 1575 the empire had gained a considerable level of expansion. This further prevented Akbar to beseech the Khwaja's spirit for bestowing upon him more conquests and children. Assurance about the security of the empire provided Akbar the leisure to concentrate on the spiritual aspects of religion of which religious formalism, e.g. rituals and ceremonies, paying a visit to the shrines etc. constituted a negligible part. This exactly was the justification what Abul Fazl wants to tell us. But, despite showing indifference to visiting the Ajmer shrine personally there is no evidence to show that Akbar exhibited apathy towards the Khwaja or with the passing of time his devotion to the saint decreased. At the same time, he never discontinued or stopped the distribution of grants to the Ajmer shrine and to its custodians. His

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<sup>135</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign with special reference to Abul Fazl (1556-1605)*, New Delhi, 1975, p. 68.

successors Jahangir, Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb and Bahadur Shah paid their visits to the shrine. To sum up, it can well be said that "it was not Akbar that made him [Khwaja Muin ud-Din] popular, but it was Khwaja the great Sufi and his shrine, whose *barakah* (blessings), impact of teachings and ideals, had made the Mughal Emperor Akbar the great, and Ajmer, a place of universal fame."<sup>136</sup>

As said earlier, the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries in India witnessed ferment in the religious-intellectual realm. Besides the growth of popular form of *Bhakti* movement and popular Sufism, these two centuries also saw a fast growth of new sects, novel philosophies and innovative religious approaches. As a result, conventional religious thinking was criticized severely "though stabler intelligences revealed no real stampeding from the accumulated experiences of the past."<sup>137</sup> Of these movements the *Bhakti* movement, the *Nuqtawis*, the *Raushaniya* sect, the *Ikhwan us-Safa* and the *Ishraqis* are prime example of contemporaneous thought-trend which provided warp for the fabric of Akbar's religious thought.

*Bhakti* ideas fascinated Akbar's cosmopolitan attitude and definitely moulded his thought-pattern during his journey to the concept of *Sulh i-Kul* (universal peace). This concept was devised either by the Emperor himself or by Abul Fazl for him in such a way that it transformed from a mystic belief denoting the state of *fana* to that of an idea symbolizing a principle able to encourage harmony among different groups in a pluralistic society like India.<sup>138</sup> The teachings of *nirguna bhakti* saints of criticising Hinduism and Islam alike for being formalistic and divisive, found their close proximity in Akbar's view of leaving the conventional tendency of orthodox Islam—prescribed prayers and unchallenged acceptance of prophethood.

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<sup>136</sup> S.L.H. Moini, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>137</sup> K.A. Nizami, Akbar and Religion, p. 28.

<sup>138</sup> Iqtidar Alam Khan, 'Akbar's Personality Traits and World Outlook—A Critical Reappraisal', in Irfan Habib, ed., *Akbar and his India*, Delhi, 1997, p. 88.

Replying to a query of Murad in 1591,<sup>139</sup> Akbar's stress on the absoluteness of Divine Reality and a delicate suggestion that one could attain Him not by performing obligatory prayers, but only through refining the inner-self and with the aid of a preceptor, reminding us the teachings of Kabir and Nanak.

During the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries in Iran some sectarian movements arose, e.g. the *Hurufis* and the *Nuqtawis*. They attracted pseudo-intellectuals towards their fold just by philosophising ideas difficult to understand and by offering a craze for novelty. From one point of view, the *Nuqtawi* movement represented a rebellious stance against the Arab supremacy in the Islamic world. "Its followers believed that the period of Islamic ascendancy as represented by the Arabs was over; it was now the era of the hegemony of Ajam which was to continue for 8000 years."<sup>140</sup> The *Nuqtawi* movement fascinated some of the most important dignitaries of the Mughal court towards its ideological fold—Abul Fazl, Sharif Amuli and the Iranian poets, chiefly Tashbihi Kashani and Wuqui Nishapuri.<sup>141</sup> In Akbar's view regarding the millennium of Islam, symbolizing the completion of its life-span, one can hear the echo of the *Nuqtawi* concepts. The followers of the *Nuqtawiyya* sect regarded their leader [Mahmud Pasikhani Gilani, founder of the sect] as the promised *Mahdi* and called him *Insan i-Kamil* and *Murakkab i-Mubin*.<sup>142</sup> These concepts fascinated Akbar who was eager for a religious position approved by some religious-philosophical ideology. The *Nuqtawis* had faith in the transmigration of souls, a doctrine which also fascinated Akbar's mind.<sup>143</sup> They used to salute each other with the words Allah, Allah. They also carried out certain prayers with their faces turned towards the sun.<sup>144</sup> We find similarity

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>140</sup> K.A. Nizami, *Akbar and Religion*, p. 57.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

between these formalisms with the prescribed form of salutations and mode of prayers of the followers of *Din i-Ilahi*.

The *Ikhwan us-Safa* and the *Ishraqis* derive their inspiration chiefly from Plato and so are called as Muslim neo-Platonists. Both these provided an alternate to Akbar who was eager enough to get out of the conservative religious thinking. The ideology of *Ikhwan* provided him such a platform. A suggestion made by Ignaz Goldziher, the famous Hungarian scholar of Islam, and later written about by Philip K. Hitti in his *History of Arabs*, is that the name *Ikhwan us-Safa* is taken from a story in *Kalilah wa-Dimnah*, in which a group of animals, by acting as faithful friends (*ikhwan al-safa*), escape the snares of the hunter.

The literature of *Ikhwan* contains numerous ideas which communicate with the views of Akbar:<sup>145</sup>

1. They had a firm belief that because the purpose of all prophets was the same, there must be a single religion and there should be no religious bias in the society at all.
2. Man should consider himself as a part of the universe to which all living beings including animals and birds are associated; so a man ought to be considerate and benevolent to all animals.
3. The concept relating to millennium also occupied a position in the religious philosophy of *Ikhwan*.
4. Owing to the influence of Ismaili ideology, the Imam had a significant place in the religious belief of *Ikhwan*. He played a central role in the emancipation of the fallen souls.

The philosophy of Shaikh Shihabuddin Suharawardi Maqtul (1155-1191) is famous as *Hikmat ul-Ishraq* (Philosophy of Illumination). It seeks to incorporate "Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy with Zoroastrian angelology and Hermetic ideas" and is intended to place "the whole structure within the

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., pp. 71-72.

context of Sufism."<sup>146</sup> His magnum opus *Kitab Hikmat ul-Ishraq* made a profound impression on Muslim thought and created a novel Islamic intellectual viewpoint.

According to Suhrawardi's theory of *Ishraq*, God and the creation should be interpreted as light. Human soul is an element of light (*nur*) and God is 'light of lights' (*nur ul-anwar*). All creation is a successive outflow from this supreme 'light of lights'. The universe and all levels of existence are but varying degrees of light—the light and the darkness. In his division of bodies, he categorizes objects in terms of their reception or non-reception of light.

Suhrawardi's illuminationist philosophy is on one side influenced by Hallaj, Ghazali and Ibn Sina and on the other by the Iranian and Indian method of philosophy.<sup>147</sup> Shaikh Mubarak Nagauri, Mir Fath Ullah Shirazi, Abul Fazl Allami and a few others were dedicated scholars of the philosophy of *Ishraq*.<sup>148</sup>

Abul Fazl deemed necessary a comparative study of Hindu systems with Platonism, Peripatetic philosophy, Sufism and dogmatic theology to remove from the India society prejudice and bigotry.<sup>149</sup> It was sufficient enough to draw Akbar's consideration towards *Ishraqi* thought. For him "Shihabuddin Maqtul's 'illuminationist' theory with its suggestion of the great position of the elect of God, and the concepts of *Insan al-Kamil* (Perfect Man) and *Sulh i-Kul* in the Ibn Arabi tradition offered important alternatives within Islamic thought... which seemed to bypass the *Shariat* and establish a direct relationship with God."<sup>150</sup>

There is a striking similarity between Akbar's attitude with respect to the *Mahdavi* Movement and for the *Raushaniya* Movement. Both these movements had religio-political implications and represented a crisis and ferment in the society. Saiyid Muhammad of Jaunpur (1443-1505), concerned with the

<sup>146</sup> S.H. Nasr, 'Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi Maqtul', in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed., M.M. Sharif, 2 vols., rep., Delhi, 2001, I, p. 379.

<sup>147</sup> K.A. Nizami, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>149</sup> Ain, tr. Jarrett, III, p. 126.

<sup>150</sup> Shireen Moosvi, 'The Road to Sulh i-Kul: Akbar's Alienation from Theological Islam', in Irfan Habib, ed., *Religion in Indian History*, New Delhi, 2007, p. 173.



deterioration in Muslim ethics following the downfall of the Sharqi power, declared himself to be the *Mahdi* of the age at Mecca in 1495-96<sup>151</sup> made an intense influence on his Indian contemporaries. Though many didn't believe him to be the promised *Mahdi* yet his learning, piety and arresting personality firmly influenced whoever came with his contact and all unhesitatingly accepted him as a perfect guide and a saint.

Akbar's opinion to the *Mahdavis* led through two distinct stages.<sup>152</sup> In the initial phase, he showed reluctance to continue the Afghan policy of persecuting the *Mahdavis*. Shaikh Abdullah Niyazi and Shaikh Alai were executed during Islam Shah's reign (1545-52).<sup>153</sup> Akbar also gave them full protection against the intrigues of the orthodox groups. Later on, on account of Akbar's religious experiments the *Mahdavi* leaders harshly criticised his innovations<sup>154</sup> and deliberately avoided all contacts with the ruler and the ruling class.

"The opposition of the *ulema* to the *Mahdavis* who were deeply sincere in their religious devotion and represented a reaction against the materialistic approach of the court theologians, damaged the moral foundation of orthodoxy as represented by Makhdum ul-Mulk and Abd un-Nabi and their coterie."<sup>155</sup> Eventually, it helped Akbar to be free from the clutch of Islamic orthodoxy.

The *Raushaniya* Movement was propounded by Bayazid Ansari (1525-1572) known as Pir Roshan was a Pashtun warrior-poet and intellectual of the Barak/Urmur (known in present day as Burki) tribe who wrote in Pashto, Persian and Arabic. He was born just outside Jalandhar, Punjab, but early in his childhood, his father moved the family back to Kaniguram, the Burki heartland in today's South Waziristan. The Movement had an evident religious outlook but it had clear-cut political motivations also. "The Afghan tribes provided

<sup>151</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>152</sup> K.A. Nizami, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>153</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>154</sup> K.A. Nizami, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., pp. 48-49.

flexible human material on which Bayazid could exercise hypnotic influence by projecting himself as the divinely inspired *Mahdi* and exploit them for establishing his political prestige on the Kabul-Qandhar region."<sup>156</sup>

Akbar's preliminary response to the movement was positive because he was thinking that the movement will produce differences among the Afghan tribes and in the end, this will serve his political interests in the area—to have complete hold over Kabul-Qandhar region. On the contrary, the *Raushaniyas* explained this stance as Akbar's weakness and participated in the activities of plundering and looting, if allowed to continue, would tarnish Mughal prestige in the frontier region. "The existence of a hostile power around the Khyber pass jeopardized his [Akbar's] political interests, adversely affected commercial activities and encouraged both the Safavids and the Uzbek in their anti-Mughal designs."<sup>157</sup> A long-term struggle was waiting for the Mughal emperors to eliminate the *Raushaniyas*. In one such encounter, Akbar's favourite courtier Birbal was killed.

Bayazid's claim to be the promised *Mahdi* had political aspect, so it was intolerable to Akbar. In addition, low level skirmishes and looting raids against the Mughal Empire's outposts and trading routes by the followers of Bayazid negatively affected Mughal esteem in a politically sensitive area. With the exception of this aspect, some of Bayazid's religious views<sup>158</sup> – the position of Imam, transmigration of souls, liberal and tolerant attitude towards other religions, were not unknown to Akbar.

Due to these inherited traits and for the effects of the contemporary religio-intellectual milieu, Akbar developed a distinct mental make-up and outlook. His humanitarianism was also indebted to the *masnavi* of Maulana Jalal ud-Din Rumi and the *Diwan* of Hafiz Shirazi; the poetry of these two philosophic poets made a lasting impression on his mind.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., pp. 61-62.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., pp. 65-66.

<sup>158</sup> See K.A. Nizami, op. cit., pp. 63-64 for details.

Akbar showed that he had an inquisitive mind right from the beginning of his reign. He wanted to know about everything especially the life-pattern of the common people. In 1561, he went incognito to a popular festival near Agra "according to his excellent habit" and was engaged in "contemplating the various sorts of humanity" when he was recognised by a beggar. Only by squinting his eyes and thus making a fantastic change in his appearance was he able to hide his identity and avoid an awkward situation.<sup>159</sup>

Akbar's initial moves of egalitarianism were abolition of the practise of enslavement of war-captives (1562)<sup>160</sup>, remittance of the pilgrim tax on Hindus (1563)<sup>161</sup> and a still more revolutionary step – the abolishing of *Jizyah* (1564)<sup>162</sup> "in spite of the disapproval of statesmen, and of the great revenue, and of much chatter on the part of the ignorant." Whether these moves were dictated principally by the exigencies of state policy or were they motivated by consideration of religious tolerance or intellectual influences of any kind are debatable.<sup>163</sup>

Akbar's three initial *farmans* favouring a certain *ustad* (master) *rangrez* (dyer) Ramdas are interesting for showing his attitude to a Hindu artisan. The first one was issued in April 1561 to assign a village to Ramdas in lieu of his salary. In May 1562, another *farman* was issued to give him further land in *inam*. The third one was issued in March-April 1569 to help the same Ramdas in recovering the sum of Rs. 13 which he had lent to some person.<sup>164</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Akbarnama, tr. H. Beveridge, II, p. 225.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., pp. 246-47.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., pp. 294-95.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., pp. 316-17.

<sup>163</sup> See Iqtidar Alam Khan, 'The Nobility under Akbar and the Development of His Religious Policy, 1560-80', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 1/2 (Apr., 1968), p. 32; S.A.A. Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign with special reference to Abul Fazl (1556-1605)*, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 67-70; Shireen Moosvi, 'The Road to Sulh i-Kul: Akbar's Alienation from Theological Islam', in Irfan Habib, ed., *Religion in Indian History*, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 170-71 for details.

<sup>164</sup> See Irfan Habib's reproduction and translation of these farmans with commentary in Irfan Habib, ed., *Akbar and his India*, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 270-87.

Akbar's relations with the *Chaitanya* sect and his attitude for the temples of Mathura and its environs are quite evident through what are called the Vrindavan documents. At the recommendation of Raja Bharamal of Amber, Akbar issued a *farman* in January 1565 to grant revenue-free land to the *Chaitanya* priest Gopaldas. In October 1568 a *farman* was issued at Todar Mal's recommendation, to hand over the management of Madan Mohan and Gobind Dev temples to Jiv Goswami. A grant was made to Govardhan and other priests, upon the proposal of Shahbaz Khan Kamboh in 1576.<sup>165</sup>

When Akbar was at Kannauj in July-August 1574 he ordered Badauni to translate the *Singhasan Battisi* "which is a series of thirty-two tales about Raja Bikramajit king of Malwa, and resembles the *Tutinamah*."<sup>166</sup> When the translation was completed Badauni named it *Namah i-Khirad-afza* (the Wisdom-enhancing Book), the title being also a chronogram of its completion (1581). To Badauni's personal satisfaction, a copy of the work was placed in the imperial library.<sup>167</sup>

In 1575-76 Akbar ordered Badauni to translate the *Atharva Veda*. Badauni observed that "several of the religious precepts of this book resemble the laws of the Islam."<sup>168</sup> Shaikh Bhawan, a Brahman newly converted to Islam, was made interpreter. As Bhawan didn't work satisfactorily, Akbar first ordered Shaikh Faizi and then Haji Ibrahim Sirhindi to translate the book. The latter though ready, did not write anything.<sup>169</sup> And so it can be understood that it was a futile exercise.

Akbar ordered that the *Mahabharata* be translated "which is the most famous of the Hindu books."<sup>170</sup> The work was started in 1582 and Badauni, again, is our main information in this respect. He gives a long description about

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Tarapada Mukherjee and Irfan Habib, 'Akbar and the Temples of Mathura', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 48<sup>th</sup> Goa session, 1987, pp. 234-50.

<sup>166</sup> *Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh*, tr. Lowe, II, p. 186.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 329.

how this happened.<sup>171</sup> The translation was named *Razm-namah* and Abul Fazl wrote a long preface to it in 1587.<sup>172</sup>

In 1584, the Emperor ordered Badauni to make a translation of the *Ramayana* "which is a superior composition to the *Mahabharata*... The story is about Ram Chand Raja of Oudh, whom they also call Ram. And the Hindus pay him worship as a god in human form."<sup>173</sup>

Akbar's these munificent attempts were inconsistent with his certain moves during the 1560s and 1570s. In 1566-67 Mir Murtaza Sharif Shirazi a distinguished and a pious scholar, died and was buried at Delhi in the neighbourhood of the tomb of Amir Khusrau. Later on the Sadr [Abd un-Nabi], Qazi and Shaikh ul-Islam [Abdullah Sultanpuri] reported to Akbar that Amir Khusrau was a native of India and a Sunni, whereas Mir Murtaza was a native of Iraq and a heretic [Shia], and that consequently Amir Khusrau would find Mir's company in his grave annoying and unpleasant. The Emperor ordered that Mir's body should be taken out of the grave and buried elsewhere. This act, an atrocity upon decency, was bitterly criticised even by Badauni who considered it "a great act of injustice to both of them [Amir Khusrau and Mir Murtaza], as cannot be denied." This was due to the respect which Mir commanded during his lifetime. Scholars paid their honour to the learning of Mir by devising complementary chronograms.<sup>174</sup>

Akbar's such brutal attitude became evident again after the conquest of the fort of Chittor in 1567-68. Irritated by the glorious resistance offered by the Rajputs of a considerable time of six months, he gave a general order of massacre. More than eight thousand Rajputs were slaughtered.<sup>175</sup> Satish

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., pp. 329-30.

<sup>172</sup> For details of this Preface see S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., pp. 212-14.

<sup>173</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, pp. 346-47.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., pp. 101-102.

<sup>175</sup> Tabaqat i-Akbari, tr. B. De, II, pp. 347-48; Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 107.

Chandra suggests this figure to 30,000.<sup>176</sup> This is not to argue whether the casualties were eight thousand or thirty thousand, this misdeed can't be justified. This incident on Akbar's part was neither odds and ends of the "Central Asian tradition of barbarity to one's defeated opponents"<sup>177</sup> nor it is a corresponding incident denoting the "shift in the religious policy [of Akbar] shown by efforts at placating orthodox Muslim sentiments."<sup>178</sup> This was a fine example of unique personality trait during the medieval times—simultaneously having the tendency of cruelty and generosity! Qutbuddin Aibak (r. 1206-1210) the first *Mamluk* Sultan of the Sultanate of Delhi "is supposed to have given away lakhs but also slaughtered lakhs."<sup>179</sup>

To make a composite ruling class was a daunting task before Akbar. "... in 1555... the nobility inherited by Akbar consisted chiefly of two racial groups, the Persians and the Turanis [Central Asian]; and of the two the Turanis enjoyed a predominant position. The nobility left behind by Humayun had thus essentially a Turani complexion. The Persian nobles with the exception of Bairam Khan, Mirza Nijat, and Mirza Hasan were simply exalted scribes who could exercise but little influence on state policies."<sup>180</sup> During the period 1560-67 various revolts occurred, most of them were led by Turani nobles. "This was a definite factor in the induction of a large number of Iranis into the nobility at this time, as also of Indian Muslims..."<sup>181</sup>

Towards the formation of composite nobility, the induction of Rajputs and other Hindus into the imperial service, and granting them an equal status was a big step taken by Akbar. Akbar's Rajput policy found its evolution in three distinct phases.<sup>182</sup> In the first phase which lasted till 1572, most of the

<sup>176</sup> Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals-Mughal Empire*, New Delhi, 2001, p.107.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> Iqtidar Alam Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>179</sup> Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Delhi Sultanat*, New Delhi, 2003, p. 39.

<sup>180</sup> Iqtidar Alam Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>181</sup> Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals-Mughal Empire*, p. 102.

<sup>182</sup> See Satish Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies, the Rajputs and the Deccan*, New Delhi, 1993.

Rajput rajas, with the exception of Mewar, accepted Mughal suzerainty and were given the status of loyal subordinates and friends. They were expected to perform military service in or around their principalities, but not outside. Following the marriage of Bhara Mal's daughter to Akbar in 1562,<sup>183</sup> Bhara Mal and his son Bhagwan Das became Akbar's friends and associates. During this opening phase, Rajputs were deployed in small military operations, e.g. against Jodhpur and Merta but were not used in strategically important operations as against Chittor or Ranthambhor. Strangely enough, Abul Fazl calls the battle against Chittor a *jihad* and to those who died in the battle as *ghazis*.<sup>184</sup> To sum up it can be said that "during this phase, Akbar, despite show of personal goodwill to the Kachhwahas, remained basically within the policy framework of earlier sultans of Delhi, who tried to befriend local rajas for purpose of pacification and used them in local campaigns."<sup>185</sup>

The second phase of Akbar's relations with the Rajputs lasted from 1572 to 1580. Matrimonial relations with them were broadened and deepened but not made a necessary condition for friendship and favours. A distinct change is visible here that the Rajput rajas began to be associated with administrative responsibilities. In 1572, Bhara Mal was asked to look after Agra in conjunction with Abdullah Sultanpuri during Akbar's absence.<sup>186</sup> Akbar's growing confidence in the Rajputs became evident by giving Man Singh the command of the operations against Rana Pratap of Mewar, many Mughal nobles being placed under him. "During this phase, the Rajputs moved from the position of friends and loyal associates to allies, and actively assisted in the expansion of the empire."<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, pp. 45-46.

<sup>184</sup> Satish Chandra, 'Akbar's Rajput Policy and its Evolution- Some Considerations', in Iqtidar Alam Khan, ed., *Akbar and his Age*, New Delhi, 1999, p. 62.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

The third and final phase began in 1580 with the incursion of Mirza Hakim into the Punjab. Akbar entrusted Man Singh the responsibility of defending the Indus region against even his own half-brother.<sup>188</sup> It was an indicator of Man Singh's growing prestige as a noble because, normally, operation against a Timurid prince of blood would have been done either by the king himself or by a prince of blood or by an eminent Mughal noble. In 1586, Man Singh was sent to Kabul and appointed as *hakim* of that place.<sup>189</sup> It was a further indication of Akbar's growing trust on the Kachhvahas. "The Rajputs now emerged, along with some others, such as the Saiyids of Barha, as the sword-arm of the empire, and Rajput rajas began to be accorded important administrative assignments. Thus, from allies they now emerge as partners of the kingdom."<sup>190</sup> It was during this final phase that the Rajputs emerge as counter-poise in the nobility against the others, especially the Turanis of whose loyalty Akbar was not certain after his breach with the *ulema*.

The process of Indianization of the nobility under Akbar found its way not only through the induction of Rajputs and other Hindus of different casts – Brahmans, Khattris and Kayasthas<sup>191</sup> into the imperial service but by means of introduction of Indian Muslims into the administration also. The Mughals, after their re-conquest of India inducted two sections of Hindustanis or Indian Muslims into the imperial service. These were, first, the Saiyids of Barha who were supposed to come to India from Arabia during the Delhi Sultanate.<sup>192</sup> Owing to their martial courage and wild gallantry, the Barhas under Akbar, earned the right to serve in the front line of the army. Despite this, none of them rose to high position in the administrative hierarchy. A second section of the Hindustanis was the Shaikhzadas, descendants of those learned families or Shaikhs who had been settled in India for long. Most of them lived on *madad i-*

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>191</sup> See Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire*, p. 125 for details.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.



*mash* or revenue-free grants. Shaikh Gadai, a favourite of Humayun and Bairam Khan, was one among them who during the initial phase of Akbar's reign was appointed the chief *Sadr*.<sup>193</sup> It seems that he advanced the interests of the Suhrawardis and the Chishtis, at the cost of the Shattaris, and so he was strongly opposed to Muhammad Ghaus of the Shattari *silsilah*.<sup>194</sup>

The Kambohs formed another section in the Hindustanis. "These, apparently, were a clan or tribe, members of which are also found among the Hindus and Sikhs of Punjab."<sup>195</sup> They were famous for their acumen and quick-wittedness. The most prominent among the Kambohs was Shahbaz Khan, famous for his religious observance and his material goods. He played a vital role in many expeditions, especially against Rana Pratap, and in Bengal.<sup>196</sup> He applied the *dagh* system very strictly having the status of Mir Bakhshi.

Thus, we can see that mix nobility in which there was a balance between various ethnic and religious groups came into being during Akbar's period. The basis of this move was the idea prevailing from the time of Nizam ul-Mulk Tusi's (1018-1092) voluminous treatise on kingship titled *Siyasatnamah* (Book of Government), that no ethnic group should form a greater or more important section either in the nobility or in the army so that the king could not be dependent on any one of them. That time, the ruling class consisted of Muslims and no-one else. The credit goes to Akbar that he further developed this concept by adding the Hindus, especially the Rajputs in the aristocracy and the army so that they can be used as a counterbalance to the other sections of the nobility.<sup>197</sup>

In order to provide a policy framework in which this balanced nobility could be evolved as an integrated ruling class and can work with least friction, an integrated religious, cultural and political outlook was also necessary. This

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<sup>193</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>195</sup> Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>196</sup> Satish Chandra, Akbar's Rajput Policy and its Evolution, p. 63; See also his Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire, p. 126.

<sup>197</sup> Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire, pp. 126-27.

Akbar done by first alienating himself from theological Islam and then by inventing a political devise the *Tauhid i-Ilahi* and hereby wanting a complete loyalty towards him and to the Mughal throne.

Both Abul Fazl and Badauni give credit to Akbar for the construction of the *Ibadatkhanah* in 1575 to a considerable level of the expansion of the empire through "remarkable and decisive victories", discomfiture of the enemies, "gaining possession of the wonders of the world" and turning out everything well and thus being grateful to the God on Akbar's part augmented by the "thirst for enquiry."<sup>198</sup> However the move to open *Ibadatkhanah* for religious debates was by no means a novelty. Like Jews, Christians and Hindus, the Muslims also involved themselves in public arguments on theological points, both to satisfy intellectual curiosity and establishing the superiority of their faith over others. Discussions on sectarian conflicts and other philosophical problems, e.g. free will, predestination etc. had taken place under the Umayyad (661-750) and the Abbasid (750-1258) rule. The Caliphs, the Sultans, their nobles and the prosperous section of Muslim society showed an ardent interest in such type of polemics and gave patronage to scholars who were specialist in this art. In India, the Sultans of Delhi and afterwards the provincial dynasties, promoted this practise and assembled scholars of different shades of opinion. The object of doing so was to make better the tone and standard of discussions.<sup>199</sup> The Ilkhanid Mongols, after embracing Islam during the reign of Ghazan Khan (r. 1295-1304), took special interest in discussions between *ulema* and Sufis and non-Muslims, in addition to in sectarian controversies between Muslims. This tradition had continued under the Timurid Sultan Husain Mirza Baiqara of Herat (r. 1469-1506) who had assembled a galaxy of scholars, poets and intellectuals.<sup>200</sup> Akbar had heard that the ruler of Bengal, Sulaiman Khan Karrani (r. 1566-72) used to offer prayers with some 150 renowned Shaikhs and

<sup>198</sup> Akbarnama, tr. H. Beveridge, III, p. 157; Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 203.

<sup>199</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>200</sup> *Baburnama* in S.A.A. Rizvi, Mughal Kalin Bharat- Babur, Aligarh, 1960, pp. 577-96.

*ulema* every night, and used to remain in their company till the morning, listening to commentaries and exhortations.<sup>201</sup>

In the beginning, the *Ibadatkhana* debates were open to Muslims only; Sufis, *ulema*, learned men and a few of the Emperor's favourite companions and attendants were admitted. They were classified into four groups, and Akbar moved from group to group to converse with each of them; but the hub of the wheel of discussion was the group of theologians and philosophers.

At that juncture, the question that perturbed the Emperor most was the number of free-born women one can marry legally. "The lawyers answered that four was the limit fixed by the prophet... the Emperor remarked that Shaikh Abd un-Nabi had once told him that one of the Mujtahids had allowed as many as nine wives... some [*ulema*] had even allowed eighteen from a too literal translation of the verse of the Quran, 'Marry whatever women you like, two and two, and three and three, and four and four'<sup>202</sup> but this interpretation is rejected. His Majesty then sent a message to Shaikh Abd un-Nabi who replied that he had merely wished to point out to the Emperor that a difference of opinion existed on this point among lawyers, but that he had not given a *fatwa* in order to legalise irregular marriage proceedings. This annoyed His Majesty very much."<sup>203</sup> The *ulema* after collecting all traditions related to the subject decreed that by *mutah* [not by *nikah*] a man might marry any number of wives he pleased; such *mutah* marriages were allowed as legal by Imam Malik. The Emperor dismissed Qazi Yaqub and appointed in his place a Maliki, Qazi Husain, who on the spot gave a *fatwa* which made *mutah* marriages legal. The incident weakened the position and power of both Makhdum ul-Mulk and

<sup>201</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 203.

<sup>202</sup> *Quran*: (IV, 3). The translation of this whole verse by Abdullah Yusuf Ali is as follows: If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry woman of your choice, two, or three, or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or that which your right hand possess. That will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice.

<sup>203</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 211.

Shaikh Abd un-Nabi.<sup>204</sup> Badauni tells the consequence of the whole episode that "from this day forward the road of opposition and difference in opinion lay open, and remained so until His Majesty was appointed Mujtahid of the Empire [through the *mahzar* in 1579]."<sup>205</sup>

What disillusioned Akbar in the first phase of *Ibadatkhana* debates was the arrogant behaviour and uncompromising nature of *ulema* during the discussions. They altercated and quarrelled with each other even in the presence of the Emperor. Badauni says, "One night, all at once, the vein [of pride] in the neck of the *ulema* of the age swelled up and a horrid noise and confusion ensued. His Majesty got very angry at their rude behaviour and said to me, "In future, report any of the *ulema* who talk nonsense and cannot behave themselves, and I shall make him leave the hall." I [Badauni] said gently to Asaf Khan, "If I carried out this order, most of the *ulema* would have to leave," when His Majesty suddenly asked what I had said. On hearing my answer, he was highly pleased, and mentioned my remark to those sitting near him."<sup>206</sup> Once the process of discussing various elements of Islamic theology by scholars got accelerated and on each point there arose bitter controversy, the result was: "the antagonism of the sects [various legal schools of Islam] reached such a pitch that [one party] would call the other fools and heretics. The controversies used to pass beyond the differences of Sunni and Shia, of Hanafi and Shafai, of lawyer and divine, and they [the disputes] would attack the very bases of belief."<sup>207</sup>

Almost immediately, the debates were opened to Shias as well, thus, widening the scope of the discussions. Mulla Muhammad of Yazd was most vocal and frank in proposing his views. However, the inflexible attitude of the

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., pp. 211-13.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., p. 213.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., p. 262.

Shias convinced Akbar that they were as bigoted and fanatical as the Sunni *ulema*, as is indicated above.

After a mystical experience in May, 1578 at Bhira<sup>208</sup> [currently in Salt Range, Punjab province, Pakistan] Akbar opened the doors of *Ibadatkhanah* to non-Muslims too, thus, greatly widening the scope of the debates. Abul Fazl records that ultimately "Sufis, philosophers, orators, jurists, Sunnis, Shias, Brahmans, Jatis [Yatis, Jain ascetics], Siuras [a general name for the Jains], Charbak [Charvaka, the materialistic philosophers among the Hindus], Nazarene [Arabic Nasrani, meaning Christian], Jews, Sabi [Sabians, also called the Christians of St. John], Zoroastrians, and others enjoyed exquisite pleasure by beholding the calmness of the assembly [*Ibadatkhanah*]." <sup>209</sup> Although this led to further confusion; subjects on which Muslims were unanimous, e.g. conclusiveness of the Quranic revelation, Muhammad as the last prophet, resurrection and the day of judgement, the concept of the unity of God also came under question, to the horror of the pious or orthodox sections.<sup>210</sup> At the same time, Akbar showed inquisitiveness for the tenets of Buddhism,<sup>211</sup> Christianity,<sup>212</sup> and Zoroastrianism<sup>213</sup> apart from showing respect and following some practises of Hinduism.<sup>214</sup> He ordered Prince Murad to take a few lessons in Christianity... and charged Abul Fazl to translate the Bible.<sup>215</sup> Akbar also ordered that the sacred fire should be made over to the charge of Abul Fazl... and that he should take care [that] it was never extinguished, night or day.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Tarikh i-Akbari of Arif Qandhari, tr. Tasneem Ahmad, p. 272. For various implications of this experience see M. Athar Ali, 'The 'Vision' in the Salt Range, 1578: An Interpretation', in *Mughal India: Studies in Policy, Ideas, Society, and Culture*, ed., Irfan Habib, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 149-57.

<sup>209</sup> Akbarnama, tr. H. Beveridge, III, p. 364.

<sup>210</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 264.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., pp. 268-69.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., pp. 265, 268, 269.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., pp. 268-69.

Abul Fazl doesn't see anything improper in worshiping fire, light and the sun and justifies it from a utilitarian perspective.<sup>217</sup>

Abul Fazl puts forward various charges against Akbar by "those base ones who are nocturnal animals and blind feelers with their feet in the day" about his faith, viz. claiming of Godhead, to claim to be the prophet of the incomparable Deity, doing disfavour to the Muhammadan religion (*Din i-Ahmadi*), being associated with Shiaism and adopting the Hindu religion and he [Abul Fazl] negates them all.<sup>218</sup>

During the second phase of the *Ibadatkhana* debates in 1578-79 Abul Fazl "fell boldly into disputation in religious matters with such imbecile old men as the Sadr [Abd un-Nabi], the Qazi, the Hakim ul-Mulk, and Makhdum ul-Mulk, and had not the slightest hesitation in putting to shame, at which the Emperor was pleased... By dint of his own exertions, and the assistance of his father, and the patronage of the *Khalifa* of the age [Akbar], and by the favour of fortune, he cast them all in a short space of time down to the ground of scorn and contempt."<sup>219</sup> Abul Fazl himself sums up the prevailing situation as, "The bigoted *ulema* and the routine-lawyers reckoned themselves among the chiefs of philosophy and leader of enlightenment found their position difficult. The veil was removed from the face of many of them."<sup>220</sup> The debates were as confusing to the Emperor as they were shocking to the *ulema*. "The differences among the *ulema*, of whom one would pronounce a thing as unlawful, and another by some process of argument would pronounce the very same thing lawful, became to His Majesty another cause of unbelief."<sup>221</sup> Variations over the interpretation of the works of *hadis* (the sayings or acts of the Prophet Muhammad), seems to have diverted Akbar to the *Quran* for guidance. This too became unsuccessful, because a further puzzling difference of opinion was

<sup>217</sup> *Ain i-Akbari*, tr. H. Blochmann, I, p. 50.

<sup>218</sup> *Akbarnama*, tr. H. Beveridge, III, pp. 397-400.

<sup>219</sup> *Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh*, tr. Lowe, II, pp. 270-71.

<sup>220</sup> *Akbarnama*, tr. H. Beveridge, III, p. 366.

<sup>221</sup> *Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh*, tr. Lowe, II, p. 267.

apparent among the interpretation of the verses. Probably this was the background of the opposing differences of opinions and multiplicity of interpretations among the *ulema* on various religious matters that forced Akbar to obtain a *mahzar* from them.

The Maliki code had rescued the Emperor in legalising his irregular marriages, as we have seen, but on the whole it is quite rigid, and the Hanafi law allows greater flexibility. Moreover, application of one school of law in a pluralistic society like India could give rise to considerable complications. Akbar was fully convinced of the fact that an operational administrative mechanism couldn't be evolved without making the religious laws flexible and their interpretation liberal.<sup>222</sup>

Akbar's disenchantment with the complexities of the formalism of Islam which was a logical outcome of the *Ibadatkhanah* debates, as we shall see further, and the execution of a Brahman of Mathura in 1578 by the order of Abd un-Nabi despite Akbar's unwillingness further augmented Akbar's aforesaid conviction.<sup>223</sup>

It was about this time that Shaikh Mubarak came to the court at Fathpur. Akbar narrated the whole incident of capital punishment meted out to the Brahman and asked his opinion at which the Shaikh took a quite different stance by saying Akbar as an *Imam* of the age and a *Mujtahid*, who don't require any assistance from *ulema* in issuing commands, whether religious or secular. On asking the method of setting himself free from the dependence on *ulema*, the Shaikh said, "Make a claim to the *ijtihad*, and demand from them a *mahzar*."<sup>224</sup>

During one of the discussions about the functions of the *Imam i-Adil*, it had been brought to Emperor's notice that the prophet Muhammad and the first four caliphs always used to themselves recite the *khutbahs* during Friday prayers and on the two Eids. The Abbasids had kept alive the practice, and

<sup>222</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>224</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. T.W. Haig, III, p. 131.

some distinguished kings like Timur and Mirza Ulugh Beg had themselves recited the *khutbah*.<sup>225</sup> On Friday 1<sup>st</sup> Jamadi ul-Awwal 987 A.H. / 26<sup>th</sup> June 1579 Akabr went up into the pulpit of the Jama Masjid at Fathpur and recited the verses composed by Faizi. He then recited the *fatiha* (first chapter in the Quran), got down from the pulpit, and offered the Friday prayers. Badauni tells the story with slight variation: Akbar's stammering and becoming nervous, reciting the verses Shaikh Faizi has composed with the help of others and ordering Hafiz Muhammad Amin, the court *khatib* to lead the prayers.<sup>226</sup> No other contemporary author records that Akbar became nervous.<sup>227</sup> The *khutbah* repeated the theory that the Emperor derived his power from God—implying that he was *khalifah* (caliph) of Allah; a status officially bestowed upon Akbar through the *mahzar* by giving him the title of *Amir ul-Mominin* (commander of the faithful). This move of Akbar was only a halt in his journey in search of a satisfactory theory for his own sovereign authority. Articulated later in the writings of Abul Fazl, this new theory of kingship assigns to sovereign a semi-divine supra-religious status, about which we shall discuss later.

Claiming for himself the designation of the caliph was nothing unusual on Akbar's part. The Timurids neither acknowledged the Ottoman Sultans as *khalifah* nor accepted their over-lordship. "The Indian Mughals never ceased to take pride in the exploits of their ancestor Timur, who in July 1402 had defeated the Ottoman Bayazid Yildirim (r. 1389-1402) and taken him captive."<sup>228</sup> Timur, afterwards, had assumed the title of caliph and had transferred the capital to Samarqand, to which he denominated as *Dar ul-Khilafah* (seat of the caliphate). Babur assumed the title of *Padshah* in 1508 and later styled himself as *Ghazi, Sultan ul-Azam* and *Khaqan ul-Muazzam*<sup>229</sup> and "his policy of issuing coins

<sup>225</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 276; Tabaqat i-Akbari, tr. B. De, II, p. 520.

<sup>226</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, pp. 276-77.

<sup>227</sup> Tabaqat i-Akbari, tr. B. De, II, pp. 520-21; Akbarnama, tr. H. Beveridge, III, p. 396.

<sup>228</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>229</sup> Iqtidar Alam Khan, 'State in the Mughal India: Re-Examining the Myths of a Counter-Vision', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 29, No. 1/2 (Jan. - Feb., 2001), pp. 20-21.



bearing the name of the first four Caliphs, were steps calculated to assert his independence of all Muslim powers, Sunni as well as Shia."<sup>230</sup> In 1517, the Ottomans took control of most of the Arab lands and the last Abbasid caliph at Cairo was taken into custody and was transported to Istanbul, where he surrendered the caliphate to Selim I (r. 1512-1520). Upon conquering Egypt, Selim took the title of Caliph of Islam, being the first Ottoman sultan to do so. He was also granted the title of "*Khadim ul-Haramain ish-Sharifain*" (Servitor of the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina), by the Sharif of Mecca in 1517. In 1536, Humayun added to Babur's aforesaid list new honorific titles, like *Padshah i-Khilafat Panah* (Sovereign Defender of the Caliphate), *Padshah i-Aali* (the Exalted Sovereign), *Padshah i-Alam* (the Sovereign of the World), and *Shahinshah i-Nasal i-Adam* (The Emperor of the entire Human Race), alluding imprecisely to his claim of carrying the splendour of divinity (*jalwa i-quds*) in his person.<sup>231</sup> In 1555 Ottoman claims of paramountcy through their ambassador Sidi Ali Reis evoked no positive response from Humayun despite his insecure condition at that time.<sup>232</sup> After Akbar's accession to the throne, a letter was sent to the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman I (r. 1520-66) who was addressed as "he who has attained the exalted rank of the Caliphate" and prayers were offered that "his Caliphate may abide forever." But, at the same time the Sultan was reminded that there was installed on "the seat of the *Sultanat* and the throne of the *Khilafat* of the realms of Hind and Sind, a monarch whose magnificence is equal to that of Solomon."<sup>233</sup> Perhaps the precedent of Timur, Babur and Humayun paved the way for Akbar to claim still more ambitious titles, viz. *Padshah i-Islam* (King of Islam), *Imam i-Adil* (the Just Imam), *Mujtahid ul-Asr* (Jurist of the Age) and *Insan-i Kamil* (the Perfect Man)<sup>234</sup> and negate allegiance of any kind to the Ottomans. Thus, it can be safely concluded that during the fifteenth and

<sup>230</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., pp. 153-54.

<sup>231</sup> Iqtidar Alam Khan, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>232</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 154.

<sup>233</sup> T.W. Arnold, *The Caliphate*, London, 1965, p. 160.

<sup>234</sup> Iqtidar Alam Khan, op. cit., p. 21.

sixteenth centuries, the only claim to caliphate was one of sword and the position of the Ottomans was in no way better than that of Akbar.

Besides recognising Akbar as *khalifah*, the *mahzar* also placed him, as caliph and a just sovereign, above the *mujtahids*.<sup>235</sup> F.W. Buckler says, "So the Mughal *ulema* simply placed Akbar above the *mujtahidin*—the Shiah *ulema* of Persia—and therefore beyond Persian religious jurisdiction."<sup>236</sup> This conclusion is not correct. All *mujtahids* are not Shia *ulema*. Imam Shafai, one of the founders of the four schools of orthodox Islamic jurisprudence, considered the *mujtahid* as one who formed his own opinion by his efforts about the matters of jurisprudence. Thus, it is the exact opposite of the *muqallid* (imitator/follower). The *mujtahids* were classified into various categories—the founders of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence were characterised as the absolute (*mutlaq*) *mujtahids*. Those who by their knowledge of previous decrees had achieved the right to answer specific legal questions presented before them were called *mujtahidin bil fatwa* (jurists by legal opinion).<sup>237</sup> "Some Islamic scholars argued that the door to *ijtihad* has been closed since the tenth century, and the fresh exercise of *ijtihad* itself was prohibited."<sup>238</sup> According to *Sahih al-Bukhari*, the gate of complete *ijtihad* has been closed (*insdad i-bab al-ijtihad*). So, Akbar was not placed over the *mutlaq mujtahids* but above the *mujtahidin bil fatwa*.<sup>239</sup> The Sunni *mujtahid* in a sense is a mere *mufti* who issues a fatwa. Akbar was empowered by the *mahzar* to select any from the opposing opinions of the *muftis*.

Badauni, observing the after-effects of the *mahzar* says, "No sooner had His Majesty obtained this legal document, then the road of deciding any

<sup>235</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 279; Tabaqat i-Akbari, tr. B. De., II, p. 524.

<sup>236</sup> F.W. Buckler, 'A New Interpretation of Akbar's "Infallibility" Decree of 1579', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 4 (Oct., 1924), p. 593.

<sup>237</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 152.

<sup>238</sup> Osamu Kondo, 'Akbar and the Theologians' Declaration (Mahzar) of 1579', in Irfan Habib, ed., *Religion in Indian History*, New Delhi, 2007, p. 162.

<sup>239</sup> S. Nurul Hasan, 'The Mahzar of Akbar's Reign', in *Religion, State, and Society in Medieval India*, ed., Satish Chandra, New Delhi, 2007, p. 88, n. 18.

religious question [*ijtihād*] was open; the superiority of the intellect of the *Imam* was established, and opposition was rendered impossible [no opponent was left]."<sup>240</sup> The agreement arrived at in the *mahzar* made it possible the appointment of *qazis* of various schools of Sunni jurisprudence and even of non-Sunni, a regular practice during the reign of Akbar. Even the Shia Nurullah Shushtari could work as the *qazi* of Lahore with success which is an indicative of confidence in Akbar's justice. Even a staunch person as Badauni has appreciated Shushtari's abilities as *qazi*.<sup>241</sup> "What Akbar was most interested in at that time was the need to arouse a sense of confidence in justice, especially in the minds of the Muslims who had immigrated to India and in those of his Hindu subjects."<sup>242</sup>

According to Badauni, only Shaikh Mubarak signed the *mahzar* willingly, others reluctantly attached their signatures on it. "Shaikh Abd un-Nabi and Makhdum ul-Mulk were forcibly made to attend that assembly of base followers as if they were insignificant people... and they were forced much against their will to attest the decree."<sup>243</sup> Shah Nawaz Khan, a later authority writing about the middle of the eighteenth century, says, "When different statements were made by Abd un-Nabi and Makhdum ul-Mulk and it appeared that they were saying that they had been made to attest the document by force and against their will, Akbar, in the same year [1579] made the Shaikh [Abd un-Nabi] the leader of the caravan and set him off with a sum of money for the chief men of Mecca, and for the indigent there, and he also dismissed Makhdum ul-Mulk. In this way he exiled them from his territories."<sup>244</sup>

Apart from arising belief in justice in the Hindu subjects and the immigrant Muslims, thus, making them feel that it was their empire, the *mahzar* officially installed Akbar as the caliph in the territory of India. "Akbar was

<sup>240</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 280.

<sup>241</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Haig, III, p. 194.

<sup>242</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., pp. 156-57.

<sup>243</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, III, p. 83, quoted by S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 149.

<sup>244</sup> Msair ul-Umara, tr. H. Beveridge, I, p. 43.

certainly not prepared to admit the legal supremacy of the Ottoman sultans, nor was he willing to permit his own Muslim subjects to owe an allegiance to anyone but himself and especially not to a rival sultan."<sup>245</sup> The *mahzar* also helped to develop the Mughal Empire as a 'culture state.'<sup>246</sup> The sixteenth century witnessed the emergence of four great powers in Asia—Ottoman, Safavid, Uzbek and Mughal—each battling for their supremacy and demarcating their religious allegiance. "Abdullah Khan Uzbek has banned all schools of law except the Hanafi school. The Shahs of Iran were the ardent upholders of Shiaism and recognised no other branch of law. The Ottomans were no less bigoted in their outlook. It was, therefore, left to the son of the founder of *Din Panah* [Humayun], to one fed on the liberal tradition of Maulana Rum and Hafiz, to one living in the midst of a great cultural upsurge thrown up as a result of the growing unity of Hindus and Muslims, of Shias and Sunnis, to declare that the Mughal empire would be the monopoly of no one sect, no one school, no one group of mullahs. This document [the *mahzar*] is an enunciation of the religious policy of the Mughals vis-à-vis those of the Safavids, Uzbeks or the Ottomans. It released the Mughal empire from the shackles of sectarianism. The Mughal empire, being more liberal and cultured in its outlook, began to have an attractiveness for the intellectuals and freedom-loving people throughout the world of Islam."<sup>247</sup>

Although Akbar, after becoming certain of the barrenness of the debates, closed the *Ibadatkhana* partially in 1581, and finally in 1582, it would be wrong to dismiss the *Ibadatkhana* debates as futile and having no effect. The effects of these religious discussions were fruitful and far-reaching. During the first phase of the *Ibadatkhana* debates (1575-78), the shallowness of the knowledge of *ulema*, in whom Akbar had placed great confidence, and their inability to understand the practical needs of the administration exposed. "The

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<sup>245</sup> S. Nurul Hasan, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

interpretation of the law, the *hadis* and the Quranic commentaries continued to be more challenging for Akbar; but the extent of differences between the sects soon appeared to him as a rank jungle of confusion. On the whole, the results of the discussions were ruinous to those who clung to the antiquated interpretations of Islamic theology."<sup>248</sup>

The debates underwent during the second stage (1578 onwards) created more positive results and had enduring effects. Akbar was convinced, according to Badauni that, "... there are wise men to be found and ready at hand in all religions, and men of asceticism, and recipients of revelation and workers of miracles among all nations and that the Truth is an inhabitant of every place: and that consequently how could it be right to consider it as confined to one religion or creed, [especially to] one which had only recently made its appearance and had not as yet endured a thousand years! And why assert one thing and deny another, and claim pre-eminence for that which is not essentially pre-eminent?"<sup>249</sup>

Badauni's above account shows Akbar's mental state in 1579. It can be said, thus, that the year 1579 was *annus mirabilis* for Akbar. As an outcome of the debates in *Ibadatkhana*, Akbar was convinced that the truth is found in every religion, it is not restricted to any particular one. This paved the way for Akbar's notion of *Sulh-i-Kul*. By obtaining *mahzar*, Akbar was now free to exercise his own judgements in religious matters [in accordance with the *Quran* and *hadis*] for the 'benefit of the nation' and 'happiness of mankind.' This enabled him to dispense justice to his entire subjects even-handedly and to shape the Mughal administrative machinery as a non-sectarian structure. By banishing Abd un-Nabi and Makhdum ul-Mulk, Akbar made himself free from the dominance of *ulema* who as a class "were a threat to his broadly based

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<sup>248</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 139.

<sup>249</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 264.

religious and political policies and were hostile to his policy of peace and concord with all the sections of Indian population."<sup>250</sup>

Akbar was not satisfied with taking the headship of his Muslim subjects only through leading the Friday prayers, reciting of the *khutbah* on his name and finally obtaining the *mahzar*. In order to attract his entire subjects irrespective of caste and creed and to provide a national character<sup>251</sup> to the Mughal Empire, an alternative theory of kingship was necessary to be evolved. As expressed by Abul Fazl, this theory assigned a semi-divine supra-religious status to the sovereign. As Prof. John F. Richards aptly puts it, "This new imperial doctrine was the result of a brilliant partnership in which Akbar's own intuitive sense of political need, his desire for broad political support and what seems to have been a mystical sense of his own mission found a direct response in the mind of Abu'l Fazl who characterized sovereignty as divine light (*farr-i izadi*)."<sup>252</sup> The sources and influences which led to formalize this political theory were manifold—the early Greek thought from which was derived the social contract theory, Ibn i-Arabi's concept of *Sulh i-Kul* and *Insan i-Kamil*, and Shihab ud-Din Suharawardi Maqtul's *Ishraq* theory. Abul Fazl, in a chapter in the *Ain* entitled *Rawa i-Rozi* (The Provision of Livelihood) says, "Whereas abundant differences are embedded in the nature of humankind, and disturbance, internal and external, is of daily growth, and huge desires speed fast and anger is quick to break out, in this demon-land of unmanliness, [therefore] friendship is scare and justice absolutely non-existent. In all circumstances, in such a place of tumult, relief is not possible except through the punitive power of a single man (*qahr i-wahdat*). That life-saving medicine cannot be provided except through the terror (*shikoh*) of just rulers. When a house or inhabited quarter

<sup>250</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, 'Dimensions of Sulh i-Kul (Universal Peace) in Akbar's Reign and the Sufi theory of Perfect Man', in Iqtidar Alam Khan, ed., *Akbar and his Age*, New Delhi, 1999, p. 12.

<sup>251</sup> Through 'the union of India under one head.' G.B. Malleson, *Rulers of India: Akbar*, Gloucestershire, 2010, p. 93.

<sup>252</sup> J.F. Richards, 'The Formation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir', in M. Alam and S. Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Mughal State, 1526-1750*, Delhi, 1998, pp. 139-40.

cannot be administered without the fear or hope from a perspicuous head (*peshwa*), how is it possible for the disturbance of the world's nest to die down without that recipient of Divine Light (*paziranda i-farr i-izidi*) [the righteous ruler] and how would the property, life, honour and religion of the world's people be protected?"<sup>253</sup> Here Abul Fazl is emphasizing to a theory of social contract justifying the inevitability of political authority. For that reason, "the wages of protection" (*dast-muzd i-pasbani*) have to be paid to the sovereign for protecting the four "essences" (property, life, honour, religion). No wages or taxes could be too high for such task, but "just sovereigns do not take more than what suffices for their task and do not soil their hands by desiring more."<sup>254</sup>

Abul Fazl, while putting the terrestrial sovereignty at the highest position in the pecking order of objects receiving spiritual light, uses the imagery, even the terminology of the *Ishraq* tradition. For the *Ishraqis*, the Sun becomes a symbol of God-derived spiritual lights, each of which "from degree to degree, illumines the presence of each lower degree" (Henry Corbin). Abul Fazl says, "To the Unique Almighty, there is no higher station than that of the King (*Padshah*)... Royalty is a light from the Inimitable Almighty and a ray from the world-illuminating Sun, the essence of the books of perfection, the assemblage of excellences. In the language of the day it is called *farr i-izidi* (divine light); in the ancient [Iranian] language, *kaihan-khwura* (world-illuminating light)."<sup>255</sup> Here Abul Fazl places the sovereign as a supra-religious entity in the sense that although he is not a product of any religion, he yet has authority from God.

It was the "godly ruler" (*farmanfarma i-haqiqi*), the just one to whom the title of *Padshah* was suitable and who was the recipient of God's light. This exalted one having the special station near God could be the "Perfect Man" as

<sup>253</sup> Ain i-Akbari, ed., H. Blochmann, I, p. 290, tr. in Irfan Habib, 'A Political Theory for the Mughal Empire: A Study of the Ideas of Abul Fazl', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 59<sup>th</sup> Session, Patiala, 1998, p. 332.

<sup>254</sup> Ain, I, pp. 290-91, tr. in Irfan Habib, op. cit., p. 332.

<sup>255</sup> Ain, I, p. 2, tr. in Irfan Habib, op. cit., p. 333.

was conceptualized in Ibn al-Arabi's tradition. Two important functions that Abul Fazl assigns to such a sovereign are religious tolerance and respect for reason. Both represent major divergences from conventional political thought in Islam.

The first condition, he says, is "the fulfilling [by the sovereign] of the obligations of being father (*pidari*) of mankind: Different kinds of persons receive comfort from his benevolence and out of the diversity of religion the dust of duality does not rise forth."<sup>256</sup> This was the forbearance of contradictory faiths, which Abul Fazl incorporated in the phrase he and his master so often used, viz. *Sulh i-Kul*, 'absolute peace' or 'universal peace' or more precisely "universal toleration."<sup>257</sup> For the ruler, *Sulh i-Kul* meant a policy of tolerating all religious and other differences including idol-worship because "consistent with his concept of God of different religious beliefs, Ibn al-Arabi does not consider idol-worship objectionable in so far as the object of a man's worship is God Himself. To him the Prophet Muhammad in his condemnation of idolatry was concerned with the common people's worship of form and their ignorance of Reality."<sup>258</sup>

"There is no doubt that the urge for the pursuit of *Sulh i-Kul*, as state policy, owed much to the position of Mughal Empire, situated in a multi-religious<sup>259</sup> country. It accorded closely with the patriotism for "Hindustan" which both Akbar and Abul Fazl were so frankly encouraging. Religious tolerance, which to Barani had seemed an unworthy compromise, could now be proclaimed an essential function of the state, required by the highest principles of mystic truth."<sup>260</sup>

<sup>256</sup> Ain, I, pp. 2-3, tr. in Irfan Habib, op. cit., p. 334.

<sup>257</sup> Ain, tr. Jarrett, III, p. 222.

<sup>258</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>259</sup> "... in a multi-religious and multi-racial country like India, a working administrative machinery could not be evolved without making the Hanafi laws flexible and their interpretation liberal." S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>260</sup> Irfan Habib, op. cit., p. 335.



The second function assigned by Abul Fazl to the true, just sovereign is that he "shall not seek popular acclaim through opposing reason (*aql*)."<sup>261</sup> We find Abul Fazl committed to his adherence to reason and science, in spite of his extensive use of the concepts and beliefs of Sufism. A major reason of it was the opposition offered by rationalism to orthodox traditionalism, regarded by Akbar as his foremost enemy. Abul Fazl quoted among Akbar's 'happy sayings' the following, "Commending obedience to the dictates of reason and reproving the slavish following (*taqlid*) of others is so clear that it does not need any argument from me. If imitations were commendable, all prophets would have followed their ancestral customs."<sup>262</sup> But, this rationalism was standing on a weak and inconsistent foundation. "... the world view of the Mughal and the Hindu ruling classes was the product of a long tradition which was shaped by religion. The task of breaking this tradition entailed a long and difficult struggle."<sup>263</sup> Abul Fazl lamented about "the blowing of the heavy wind of *taqlid* (tradition), and the dimming of the lamp of *khirad* (reason, wisdom). Of old, the door of 'how and why' has been closed; and questioning and enquiry have been deemed fruitless and the act of a pagan (*kufr*)... Though some of the enlightened have tried a little to pursue a different path, yet they have followed the path of [correct] conduct no more than half-way."<sup>264</sup> In the formulation of either the *Ishraq* theory or the concepts of Ibn al-Arabi, there was little interference of reasoning. Sufis of all the *silsilahs* were unanimous with the *ulema* in denying the autonomy, let alone the supremacy, of reason. Abul Fazl never understood and dealt with this discrepancy and made no effort to resolve it, which shows an existent flaw in his rationalism.<sup>265</sup>

<sup>261</sup> Ain, I, p. 3, tr. in Irfan Habib, op. cit., p. 335.

<sup>262</sup> Ain, tr. Jarrett, III, p. 427.

<sup>263</sup> Satish Chandra, Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire, New Delhi, 2001, p. 452.

<sup>264</sup> Ain, II, p. 3, tr. in Irfan Habib, op. cit., pp. 335-36.

<sup>265</sup> Irfan Habib, op. cit., p. 336.

The concept of Sufi thought of Perfect Man of Ibn al-Arabi made a deep impression upon Akbar. It asserts that as an Image of God (created in God's image), mankind is the vicegerent of God on earth. However all men are not perfect, only a few of them who have recognized their fundamental unity with the Ultimate Reality deserved to be called Perfect Man. According to one of Ibn al-Arabi's most outstanding interpreter, Abdul Karim Jili (1365-1406), the author of *al-Insan al-Kamil*, the absolutely Perfect Man is Prophet Muhammad, the first created of God and the model of all other created beings. Next to him apostles, prophets and eminent saints were also included in the category of Perfect Man.<sup>266</sup>

It would be wrong to assume that Akbar was altogether unaware of this concept but it was Shaikh Taj ud-Din Zakariyya Ajodhani who was known as *Taj ul-Arifin* (Crown of Gnostics), with whom Akbar came to contact about 1579 and from him he learnt the minute details of various concepts of Ibn al-Arabi. Badauni says that Shaikh Taj ud-Din was second only to Shaikh Ibn al-Arabi but simultaneously denounces him for "he became a chief cause of the weakening of the Emperor's faith in the commands of Islam."<sup>267</sup> Shaikh Taj asserted, in connexion with his discussion on the theory of *insan al-kamil*, that the title Perfect Man should be applied to the Caliph of the Age, explaining it according to Badauni, "in the sense of Holiest and interpreting most things in a manner not wholly correct, and not a few of them quite wrong."<sup>268</sup> Badauni goes on to say, "And he invented a *sijdah* (prostration) for Akbar and called it *zamin-bos* (kissing the ground), and looking on the reverence due to a king as an absolute religious command, he called the face of the king *Kabah i-Muradat* (sanctum of desires) and *Qiblah i-Hajat* (Goal of necessities). In support of these

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<sup>266</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>267</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 266.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

matters, he brought forward some apocryphal traditions, and the practices of the disciples of some of the Shaikhs of India."<sup>269</sup>

As far as the invention of *sijdah* is concerned, Badauni is not much reliable because he assigns the invention of the same to Qazi Nizam of Badakhshan (d. 1584) and adds that one of the theologians, Mulla Alim of Kabul used to say regretfully, "Alas! That I was not the inventor of this ordinance."<sup>270</sup>

The theory of *insan i-kamil* became extremely successful very quickly among other intellectuals of Akbar's reign. Badauni, in his description of 1580, says, "In this year low and mean followers, who pretended to be learned, but were in reality fools, collected [false] evidence [and demonstrated] that His Majesty was the *Sahib i-Zaman* (Lord of the Age), who would remove all differences of opinion among the seventy-two sects of Islam and [between] the Hindus [and Muslims]."<sup>271</sup> Some Brahmans tried to prove that Akbar was an incarnation like Lord Rama and Krishna, whose advent was promised in their sacred books. They also brought some Sanskrit verses in which it was foretold that a great conqueror would rise up in India who would honour Brahmans and cows and govern the earth with justice.<sup>272</sup> There were, no doubt, toadies and crawlers, both Muslims and Hindus, who used the situation to suit their personal interests. Coincidentally, some of their formulations were attuned with Akbar's own notions of sovereignty.

To consolidate and strengthen this new all-inclusive theory of kingship, it was necessary to ensure the loyalty of the nobility to the king and bind them to the Mughal throne. This was done by Akbar through a political devise—the so called *Tauhid i-Ilahi* or *Din Ilahi*. Badauni, who is our chief authority on this subject, in his account of 1583, tells of Akbar's interest in yogic and ascetic way

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, III, pp. 153-54, quoted by S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>271</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 295.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., p. 336.

of life to get an exceptionally long life. He gave his religious system the name of *Tauhid i-Ilahi*. The Emperor used to denominate the group of his special disciples (*murids*) as *chela* which is a specific technical term in the yogic system.<sup>273</sup> But, the theory of *Tauhid i-Ilahi* as described by Badauni "is a curious amalgam of Rumi and Gorakhnath and could not serve as the framework for any durable religious system."<sup>274</sup>

Badauni uses the term *Din Ilahi* with reference to a declaration which Mirza Jani Beg is said to have signed. It is described among the events of 1582. But, as Mirza Jani Beg appeared at Akbar's court<sup>275</sup> only in 1593, the event must have happened, if at all, about the same year. Badauni says, "Ten or twelve years later, things have come to such a pass that abandoned wretches such as Mirza Jani Beg, governor of Thatta, and other apostates, wrote their confession to the following effect—I, so and so, son of so and so, do voluntarily, and with sincere predilection and inclination, liberate and dissociate myself from the traditional and imitative (*taqlidi*) Islam which I have seen my fathers practise and heard them speak about, and join the *Din Ilahi* of Akbar Shah accepting the four degrees of devotion, which are the sacrifice of property, life, honour, and religion."<sup>276</sup>

Blochmann translated the first part of the declaration as, "I, such a one, son of such a one, have willingly and cheerfully renounced and rejected the Islam in all its phases, whether low or high, as I have witnessed it in my ancestors..."<sup>277</sup>

Lowe had translated it, "I who am so and so, son of so and so, do voluntarily, and with sincere predilection and inclination utterly and entirely

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid., p. 335.

<sup>274</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign, p. 391.

<sup>275</sup> Akbarnama, tr. H. Beveridge, III, p. 971.

<sup>276</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, II, p. 304, tr. in S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 391.

<sup>277</sup> Ain, tr. Blochmann, I, p. 203.

renounce and repudiate the religion of Islam, which I have seen and heard of my fathers..."<sup>278</sup>

This declaration neither refer to the rejection of Islam in all its phases as Blochmann interprets it, nor to the renunciation and repudiation of Islam as Lowe translates it. Mirza Jani vowed only to liberate and dissociate himself (*ibra wa tabarra namuda*) from the traditional and imitative Islam (*din i-majazi wa taqlidi*). We have seen Akbar's denunciation of *taqlid* (tradition) and his constant emphasis upon *aql* (reason). Badauni says that Akbar tried to persuade Qutb ud-Din Muhammad Khan, Shahbaz Khan and the like to renounce *taqlid* but they refused.<sup>279</sup> It seems that "after 1580, Islam in Akbar's court came to be divided into two: the *taqlidi* by the orthodox and the *ijtihadi* or *tahqiqi* (based on truth or reasoning) followed by the unorthodox. Abul Fazl and a section of the new elite belonged to the latter group."<sup>280</sup>

Badauni mentions the *Ikhlas i-Chahargana* (four degrees of devotion) as they were the basic pillars of Akbar's new faith or, in other words, Akbar's heretical innovations. He defines them at the end of his account of 1580 as follows, "During this time the four degrees of devotion to His Majesty were defined. [They] consisted in readiness to sacrifice to the Emperor property, life, honour and religion. Whoever had sacrificed these things possessed the four degrees; and whoever had sacrificed one of these four possessed one degree. All the courtiers now put down their names as faithful disciples of the throne."<sup>281</sup> Badauni here is surprisingly accurate in defining the nature of this new faith of Akbar, let out of malice. By asserting "faithful disciples of the throne" he tells the purpose of the new faith—to bind the nobility to the Mughal throne and to ensure their interminable loyalty to the king. However, Badauni is not correct in one thing—he says that 'all' the courtiers have

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<sup>278</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 314.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., p. 282.

<sup>280</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 392.

<sup>281</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 299.

accepted the new faith. He contradicts this in his account of 1595, which makes it clear that even by that time not all the courtiers were *murids*, and Sadr i-Jahan, the mufti of the Imperial Dominions, had not even undergone initiation.<sup>282</sup>

Blochmann presents a list of eighteen persons said to have been the members of *Din Ilahi*.<sup>283</sup> Modern scholarship considers it to be a complete list of the members of the said faith. Both Blochmann and Lowe translated *ba halqa i-iradat dar aamad* as "joined the Divine Faith"<sup>284</sup> thus denoting that *iradat* and Divine Faith are the same. The paucity of number of adherents of *Din Ilahi* ceased it to be considered seriously even as a religion.

Although Badauni didn't definitely say that the *ikhlas i-chahargana* and Akbar's new faith are identical, yet his account of discipleship, *ikhlas i-chahargana* and his allegations about the apostasy of Akbar and his counsellors show that in his opinion they were the same. An interesting example about the subject of discipleship was Raja Man Singh's reply to Akbar, as Badauni recorded, makes the significance of the four degrees of devotion clearer. In 1587 when Man Singh was made governor of Bihar, Akbar summoned him and the Khan i-Khanan to a private assembly. During the conversation which followed, Akbar introduced the subject of discipleship and proceeded to test Man Singh who answered bluntly as Badauni recorded, "If discipleship means willingness to sacrifice one's life, I have already carried my life in my hand: what need is there of further proof? If, however, the term has another meaning and refers to faith, I certainly am a Hindu. If you order me to do so, I will become a Muslim, but I know not of the existence of any other path (religion) than these two. At this point the matter stopped and the Emperor did not question him any further."<sup>285</sup>

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., p. 418.

<sup>283</sup> Ain, tr. Blochmann, I, pp. 218-19.

<sup>284</sup> Ain, tr. Blochmann, I, p. 218; Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 418.

<sup>285</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 375.

Man Singh's integrity was, of course, unquestionable. What Akbar was trying here to judge his reaction, since his *watan jagir* has been transferred from the Punjab to Bihar. "Man Singh's reply indicates that in the minds of the people the discipleship was thought to have some religious significance, but that Akbar did not think so, but demanded the compliance of four degrees of devotion on the part of high dignitaries for political purposes."<sup>286</sup>

Abul Fazl's works show his growing anxiety about the dearth of high officers of honesty and merit who could manage the political and military needs of the expanding empire effectively and stay beside Akbar's ambitions of conquest and efficient government.<sup>287</sup> This need could only be fulfilled, according to him, by a group of devoted followers who were prepared to put a premium on the imperial interests over their own personal and religious ones. "The Four Degrees of Devotion were intended to remind the imperial dignitaries, whether Rajputs or Mughals, Indian Muslims or Afghans, Turanis or Iranis, that religious prejudices and racial considerations should not be allowed to interfere with the imperial interest in any situation. In fact, the Four Degrees of Devotion provided the principal ideological force which sought to unify the new Mughal elite around the Mughal throne."<sup>288</sup> This was a legacy Akbar left for his successors, since the loyalty to the throne remained unswerving for the next hundred years. The institution of discipleship also set a tradition of devoted loyalty to the Mughal dynasty exceptionally richer than any previous Muslim ruler in India had left for his descendants.

Princes and high dignitaries considered themselves to be *murids* (disciples) of their Emperors even under Akbar's successors, and claimed to have obtained guidance from the Emperor's heart, a container of divine

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<sup>286</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 396.

<sup>287</sup> Akbarnama, tr. H. Beveridge, III, p. 598.

<sup>288</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 398.

inspiration, and a source of mystic illumination.<sup>289</sup> Mughal Emperors' tradition of enlisting disciples continued down even to Aurangzeb's reign. Although, such *murids* were inferior to those disciples who acted in accordance with the conditions of the Four Degrees of Devotion. Abul Fazl has described rules for the general disciples in the first book of *Ain i-Akbari* (Ain no. 77) entitled the *Ain i-Rahnamuni* (rules relating to the guidance of path). They didn't have any religious significance rather they were meant to strengthen the faithfulness of his aristocrats and the love of the common people to the Emperor.

It seems that thousands of loyal officials have considered "the chain of discipleship" as the "noose of every felicity." They contested with one another in becoming disciples, although Akbar himself often asked why he should claim to guide men before he himself was guided.<sup>290</sup>

Among the positive charges against Akbar made by Badauni is that he believed in the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. According to Badauni, Akbar much approved of the assertion that, "There is no religion in which the doctrine of transmigration has not a firm hold."<sup>291</sup> Akbar's utterances, however, indicate a serious uncertainty upon the subject in his mind.

Among some newly-formulated orders during 1583, Badauni accuses Akbar of restricting the killing of animals out of consideration for Hindus.<sup>292</sup> Akbar also prohibited eating beef<sup>293</sup> just as a mark to show reverence for Hinduism. Abul Fazl ascribes Akbar's abstinence from eating meat on certain days to Sufi (*sufiyana*) practice.<sup>294</sup> Akbar's this move seems to be inspired by his sense of compassion for animals; it is also possible that Jain influence might have reinforced him in his vegetarian ideas.

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<sup>289</sup> Introductory remarks in Aurangzeb's letter in the *Adab i-Alamgiri* and *Faiyaz ul-Qawanin*, quoted by S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 398.

<sup>290</sup> *Ain*, tr. H. Blochmann, I, p. 174.

<sup>291</sup> *Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh*, tr. Lowe, II, p. 265.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 331.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 312, 388.

<sup>294</sup> *Ain*, tr. H. Blochmann, I, p. 64.



The new form of worship which Akbar openly performed was the veneration of the sun. In connection with his account of 1583, Badauni says, "A second order was given that the sun should be worshipped four times a day: in the morning and evening, and at noon and midnight. His Majesty had also one thousand and one Sanskrit names for the sun collected, and read them daily at noon, devoutly turning towards the sun... He also adopted several other practises connected with sun-worship. He used to wear the Hindu mark on his forehead."<sup>295</sup> Abul Fazl, who was the chief advocate of a deep relationship between rulers and the sun, says that "His Majesty maintains that it is a religious duty and divine praise to worship fire and light; surely, ignorant men consider this forgetfulness of the Almighty, and fire-worship. But the deep-sighted know better... there can be nothing improper in the veneration of that exalted element [sun] which is the source of man's existence and of the duration of his life; nor should base thoughts enter such a matter... Every flame is derived from that fountain of divine light (the sun), and bears the impression of its holy essence... The fire of the sun is the torch of God's sovereignty."<sup>296</sup> However, after 1580 Akbar attached little importance to specific forms of worship.

Badauni also says that during 1579-80, it seemed likely that a general order was to be issued that people should pronounce publicly the formula, 'There is no God but God and Akbar is His *khalifah*.' But for fear of public unrest its use was restricted to a few people in the harem.<sup>297</sup> By this Badauni meant to say that the disciples pronounced the formula privately in Akbar's presence. Although this formula does not to be the same as a rejection of the prophethood of Muhammad, the disciples were not forced to utter it in any form.

Besides the institution of discipleship, the practise of *jharokha-darshan* (showing of the Emperor to the public from the palace) was introduced to

<sup>295</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 332.

<sup>296</sup> Ain, tr. H. Blochmann, I, p. 50.

<sup>297</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 281.

remind the people of the aura surrounding the throne. It made the Mughal throne an object of both love and adoration. Badauni who considered this practice to be equal to the worship of humans said, "And another lot [other than disciples], consisting of wolves among the sheep, and hunters of the weak, who were not admitted into the [hall of public audience (*daulat khanah*)], stood every morning opposite to the window near which His Majesty used to pray to the sun, and declared that they had made vows not to rinse their mouth, nor to eat and drink, before they had seen the blessed countenance of the Emperor... No sooner had His Majesty finished saying the thousand and one names of the great luminary and stepped out into the balcony, than the whole crowd prostrated themselves."<sup>298</sup>

Badauni is not entirely wrong in pointing out that hope and fear<sup>299</sup> served as inducements for becoming disciples. There was also no lack of people asking the Emperor to make fierce religious and temporal claims. Badauni says that there were shameless and ill-starred wretches who tried to persuade Akbar to bring forward some convincing proof and to assume prophethood in the manner as Shah Ismail Safavi I (r. 1501-24) had done. It would be an appropriate response to the new millennium of the *hijrah* era. Akbar was eventually convinced that confidence in him as a leader was a matter of time and good counsel and did not require the help of the sword. Badauni adds, "indeed, if His Majesty, in setting up his claims and making his innovations, had spent a little money, he would easily have got most of his courtiers, and much more [of] the [common people] into his devilish nets."<sup>300</sup>

The custom of discipleship was neither intended to be assumed the status of a religion, nor its so-called chief adherents even thought so. Akbar, who was a keen enquirer himself, could not make any pretensions to found a new religion. The rules in *Ain i-Rahnamuni* are designed to recognise Akbar as

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<sup>298</sup> Ibid., p. 336.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., p. 349.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., p. 323.

both temporal and spiritual lord of his people—spiritual not in the sense of one who has founded a religion, but of one under whom all religions could flourish freely. The aforesaid declaration of Mirza Jani Beg, who had recently entered the court and was keen enough to show his loyalty, was written, if at all, on an over-enthusiastic impulse; no such written declaration being obtained from anyone else.

That Akbar didn't repudiate or abjure Islam is evident by the attitude of two leading theologians of the time—Shaikh Abd ul-Haq Muhaddis and his son, Shaikh Nur ul-Haq. Although both were critical of some of the new ideas advanced by Akbar, yet they did not share the doom-laden view of Akbar's religious policies taken by Badauni and Sirhindi. As late as 1605, Shaikh Abd ul-Haq concluded his book *Tarikh i-Haqqi*, with a prayer where Akbar is referred to as the reigning *Padshah*, who was expected to act as the defender of Islam. In the same year, Shaikh Nur ul-Haq, author of *Zubdat ut-Tawarikh*, went out of his way in commenting that Akbar's motives in promoting religious debates were misread by the common people.<sup>301</sup>

Shah Nawaz Khan, a later authority, writing about 150 years after the death of Akbar, in his assessment said, "Akbar did not lay claim to Divinity and prophecy... the king had not acquired the elements of learning, and was not in the least in touch with books. But, he was very intelligent and his understanding was of a very high order. He wished that whatever was consonant with reason should prevail. Most of the *ulema*, with a view to worldly advantage, took the course of assentation and of flattery. The advancement of Faizi and Abul Fazl was due to this. They indoctrinated the king with rationalistic and sophistical (*safastiyya*) principles and gave the appellation of inquiry (*tahqiq*) to the serving of the cable of the observance of antiquity. They styled him the "Assayer of the Age and the Mujtahid of the

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<sup>301</sup> See translations of the relevant passages of *Tarikh i-Haqqi* and *Zubdat ut-Tawarikh* in Elliot and Dowson, vol. VI, pp. 181 and 191 respectively.

Time." As the abilities and learning of the two brothers [Faizi and Abul Fazl] were of such a high order that none of their contemporaries could grapple with them, they, who in origin were no better than the sons of a mendicant (*darveshzada*) and were in indigence, all at once attained to intimacy and influence with the sovereign. Envious people—of whom the world is ever full—and especially the rival *mullas* who were desk-ridden (*saqiqaband*) and gave to their dislike and envy the name of "Defence of Faith" set no limit to the lies which they circulated. There were no commotions which they did not excite. From fanaticism and partisanship they sacrificed their lives and fortunes."<sup>302</sup>

## 2.5 AKBAR AND JAINISM

We have seen in the preceding pages, Akbar's commitment to non-violence of the animals and his abstinence from eating meat as a possible outcome of the influence of Jainism. It has been argued that the terms *Jati* [Sanskrit, *Yati*], *Siura* [Sanskrit, *Shvetambara*] used by Abul Fazl<sup>303</sup> and *Samanas* [Sanskrit, *Shramana*], employed by Badauni<sup>304</sup> referred to the monks of Shvetambara sect of Jainism and not to the Buddhist monks.<sup>305</sup> Akbar never came under Buddhist influence in any degree and no Buddhist monk participated in the religious discussions held at Fathpur Sikri.<sup>306</sup> As a result, it was natural that Akbar's knowledge of Buddhism was extremely narrow, just to the verge of ignorance. Conversely, many Jain teachers visited the imperial court or resided there at various times. "In the middle ages the centrifugal forces began to be operative powerfully, it [Jainism] further splitted into sects,

<sup>302</sup> Masir ul-Umara, tr. H. Beveridge, I, pp. 333-34.

<sup>303</sup> Akbarnama, tr. H. Beveridge, III, p. 364.

<sup>304</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 264.

<sup>305</sup> Pushpa Prasad, 'Akbar and the Jains', in Irfan Habib, ed., *Akbar and his India*, Delhi, 1997, p. 98.

<sup>306</sup> V.A. Smith, *Akbar the Great Mogul*, Delhi, 1962, p. 189.

sub-sects and subsections, viz. *Sanghas*, *Ganas*, *Gachchhas* and *Shakhas*.”<sup>307</sup> It is quite strange that Akbar came into contact with only the Shvetambara sect of Jainism, not with the Digambara sect. Jain teachers and writers of both of *Tapa Gachchha* and *Kharatara Gachchha* sections of Shvetambara sect were familiar to Akbar. As early as 1568, Buddhisagar of *Tapa Gachchha* is seen arguing with another Jain saint Sadhukirtti of *Kharatara Gachchha* in the presence of learned scholars such as Aniruddha, Mahadeva Mishra and others at Agra. Sadhukirtti was considered to be victorious and Akbar bestowed upon him the title of ‘Vadindra’.<sup>308</sup> Hiravijay Suri (1526-1595) the supreme pontiff of *Tapa Gachchha* section of Shvetambara branch of Jainism was invited by Akbar in 1582.<sup>309</sup> He arrived at Fathpur (Agra) in 1583 with sixty-seven monks.<sup>310</sup> He had previously obtained considerable recognition for his commentary on *Jambudvipa-prajnapiti*.<sup>311</sup> Abul Fazl was highly impressed with his learning and saintly life. Hiravijay made a profound impression upon Akbar during his debates with the Emperor. He also created interest for Jain philosophy in Akbar when he held forth on matters, e.g. resurrection and redemption, misery of life and the idea of personal God.<sup>312</sup> Akbar was so much pleased with him that he conferred upon him the title of *Jagad Guru* (the World Teacher).<sup>313</sup> Although, there is a debate whether Akbar bestowed on him this title or was it conferred on him by his devoted followers?<sup>314</sup> He persuaded the Emperor to forbid the slaughter of animals for six months in Gujarat and abolish the confiscation of property of deceased persons, removal of the *Sujija* Tax (*Jizyah*) levied on Hindus in Gujarat

<sup>307</sup> Shirin Mehta, ‘Akbar as Reflected in the Contemporary Jain Literature in Gujarat’, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 20, No. 9/10 (Sep. - Oct., 1992), p. 54.

<sup>308</sup> Aghar Chand Nahta, *Aitihasik Jain Kavya Sangrah*, Calcutta, 1888, pp. 135-38, quoted by Pushpa Prasad, op. cit., p. 106.

<sup>309</sup> A.L. Srivastava, *Akbar the Great*, I, Agra, 1962, p. 263.

<sup>310</sup> Shirin Mehta, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>311</sup> Kalipada Mitra, ‘Jain Influence at the Mughal Court’, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Calcutta, 1939, pp. 1062-63.

<sup>312</sup> Siddhi Chandra, Bhanu Chandra Charita, ed., Mohanlal Dalichand Desai, Calcutta, 1941, pp. 26-27, quoted by Pushpa Prasad, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>313</sup> Kalipada Mitra, op. cit., p. 1061; V.A. Smith, op. cit., pp. 267-68.

<sup>314</sup> See Pushpa Prasad, op. cit., p. 100 for details.

and a *Mundka Sulka* (possibly a tax on pilgrims) and freeing of caged birds and prisoners.<sup>315</sup> Akbar also issued a *farman* in 1584, ordering his officials not to allow killing of animals during the twelve days of the Jain *Paryushan Parv*, in places where Jains were settled.<sup>316</sup>

After discussing with Akbar for two years, Hiravijay left Agra for Gujarat in 1585 and left behind his disciple Shanti Chandra at the Mughal court. At the time of his departure, Hiravijay bestowed the title of *Upadhyaya* upon Shanti Chandra.<sup>317</sup> Shanti Chandra composed for Akbar a panegyric in Sanskrit entitled *Kripa-rasa Kosha* (treasury of the merciful deeds of the emperor),<sup>318</sup> which contained 128 verses.<sup>319</sup> He used to recite this poem before the emperor in which he had mentioned the gallant conquests, all-embracing religious outlook and the qualities of Akbar.<sup>320</sup> Akbar is said to have adopted strict policy and went on prohibiting animal-slaughter at his request.

After the departure of Shanti Chandra for Gujarat in 1587, Hiravijay sent another illustrious Jain scholar Bhanu Chandra to Akbar's court at Lahore, who lived there until 1592.<sup>321</sup> Although, it is suggested that Bhanu Chandra and his disciple Siddhi Chandra continued to stay up to Jahangir's time.<sup>322</sup> Particulars of Bhanu Chandra's stay at Akbar's court are given in his biography *Bhanu Chandra Charita*, composed by his disciple aforementioned. Bhanu Chandra wrote a commentary in Sanskrit on one thousand names of the Sun, *Surya-sahasranama*, and explained their significance to Akbar.<sup>323</sup> After knowing the far-off of Bhanu Chandra's residence from the royal court, Akbar granted a piece of land to the Jain community in the Lahore fort as Bhanu Chandra keenly

<sup>315</sup> Pushpa Prasad, op. cit., p. 99; Shirin Mehta, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>316</sup> Pushpa Prasad, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>317</sup> Bhanu Chandra Charita, p. 27, quoted by Pushpa Prasad, op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>318</sup> Bhanu Chandra Charita, p. 8, Chapter 1, Verse 127, quoted by Pushpa Prasad, op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>319</sup> Shirin Mehta, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims, p. 137.

<sup>322</sup> Shirin Mehta, op. cit., p. 56; Pushpa Prasad, op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>323</sup> Hirananda Shastri, 'Akbar as Sun Worshipper', *The Indian Historical Quarterly*, IX, 1933, p. 137-38.

wanted. A splendid temple was erected providing halting rooms for the monks. An idol of Jain *tirthankara* Shantinath was sanctified in this temple.<sup>324</sup>

Siddhi Chandra, Bhanu Chandra's disciple, was a great scholar of Sanskrit and Persian. The aforementioned biography of his master was instructive and has a skilful description of the discussions that held at the court among the Jain teachers and Akbar, Abul Fazl and Birbal. The Jain theory of *karma* (action), *moksha* (emancipation from the cycle of birth, old age and death) and *ahinsa* (non-violence) in relation to the Islamic tenets were argued.<sup>325</sup> Siddhi Chandra performed 108 *avadhanas* (attending to 108 things at a time), a marvellous accomplishment of memory.<sup>326</sup> Akbar being much pleased awarded him the title of '*Khush-faham*' (man of sharp intelligence). After that, Siddhi Chandra stayed permanently at the court till late in Jahangir's reign.<sup>327</sup>

In the biography of his master Bhanu Chandra, Siddhi Chandra also gives the details about the merits and virtues of Akbar and Abul fazl.<sup>328</sup>

In 1592 Akbar sent from Lahore a *farman* to Hiravijay Suri, inviting his able successor Vijaysen Suri to present himself at the court. He remained at the court from 1593 to 1595. He also had ardent and accomplished band of disciples stayed with him at the court. One of them was Gunavijay who composed *Vijay Prashasti Kavya* in fond memory of his master in 1632.<sup>329</sup> According to this book, the Brahmans who felt jealous of the exalted position of the Jain teacher at the court imputed that the Jains were atheists. Vijaysen Suri, in a debate arranged on the subject of the existence of God, proved from the Jain scriptures the falseness of the allegation and convinced the emperor, Shaikhs, Brahmans and others, that the Jain concept was same as explained in the *Sankhya* philosophy of

<sup>324</sup> Rishabh Das, Hiravijay Suri Rasa, text published in Ananda Kavya Mahodadhi, V, Verses 36-37, p. 182, quoted by Pushpa Prasad, op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>325</sup> Shirin Mehta, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>326</sup> Mohanlal Dalichand Desai, Jain Sahitya No Sankshipta Itihas, Bombay, 1933, p. 555, quoted by Shirin Mehta, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>327</sup> Bhanu Chandra Charita, p. 41, quoted by Pushpa Prasad, op. cit., p. 104.

<sup>328</sup> Bhanu Chandra Charita, pp. 23-24, 66-67, quoted by Pushpa Prasad, op. cit., pp. 104-5.

<sup>329</sup> Shirin Mehta, op. cit., p. 56.

the Brahmans. It earned him from the emperor the title '*Savai Hiravijay Suri*,'<sup>330</sup> i.e. a quarter greater than Hiravijay Suri. He also received the title of '*Kali Saraswati*' from Akbar.<sup>331</sup> At the instance of Vijaysen Suri, Akbar had forbidden fish catching in the river Indus and Dabar Lake near Sikri for four months in a year and ordered "*Amari Ghosana*"—banning the killing of animals during Jain festival of *Paryushana* and *Mahavira Jayanti*. Akbar also stopped the practice of confiscation of the property of the dead without heir by the state.<sup>332</sup> Akbar granted Vijaysen the Siddhachal, Girnar, Taranga Keshrinath and Abu in Gujarat as also the five hills of Rajgir and the hills of Sammed Shikhar in present day Jharkhand, as also all other Jain temples and places of pilgrimage in the empire so that no one may kill any animal there.<sup>333</sup> This encouraged the movement of the Jains in the form of large pilgrim-parties throughout Northern India from Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh to Bihar and other places in Eastern India and *vice versa*. Earlier the Jains normally travelled to their holy places which were located in Gujarat and Rajasthan only. This new atmosphere naturally strengthened inter-regional social ties and trade links among the Jains.<sup>334</sup>

Besides patronising Jain saints of *Tapa Gachchha* section, Akbar extended his benefaction to the Jain monks of *Kharatara Gachchha* section too. We have seen above that Akbar conferred the title of '*Vadindra*' upon Sadhukirti of *Kharatara Gachchha*. According to the book *Akbar Pratibodha Rasa*, in 1591, at Lahore, Akbar heard through Karm Chand<sup>335</sup> of the Jain teacher Jinchandra Suri, who was a great teacher of *Kharatara Gachchha*. Akbar invited him to the

<sup>330</sup> Bhanu Chandra Charita, p. 10, quoted by Pushpa Prasad, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>331</sup> Johannes Klatt, 'Extracts from the Historical Records of Jains', *Indian Antiquary*, XI, 1882, p. 256.

<sup>332</sup> Shirin Mehta, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>333</sup> Gunvijaya, *Vijay Prashsti Kavya*; Dayakushal Gani, *Labhodaya Rasa*, translated in Muniraj Vidya Vijay, *Surishwar ane Samrat*, (in Gujarati), Bhavnagar, 1920, p. 153, n. 3, quoted by Shirin Mehta, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>334</sup> Surendra Gopal, 'The Jain Community and Akbar', in Iqtidar Alam Khan, ed., *Akbar and his Age*, New Delhi, 1999, p. 163.

<sup>335</sup> Karm Chand was Oswal Vaishya who belonged to the Kharatara Gachchha. By sheer impression of merit, he became a minister at the King Kalyan Mal's court in Bikaner. He earned the favor of Akbar by defeating Muhammad Husain Mirza who invaded Gujarat. Shirin Mehta, op. cit., pp. 57-58.



court. Suri reached Lahore in 1592 with thirty-one Jain monks. The Emperor requested him to be present during all the religious discussions. Seeing Akbar's respect for the saint, the people called him '*Bade Guru*' (Great Teacher).<sup>336</sup> Akbar also conferred the title '*Yuga Pradhan*' (Master of the Age) on Jinchandra Suri.<sup>337</sup>

Thus, it is evident that Akbar out of his religious catholicity and generosity of spirit established close links with the small sect of Jainism. Jain teachers of both the sections of Shvetambara sect, *Tapa* and *Kharatara Gachchha*, were invited and patronised at Akbar's court, where they elucidated the precepts of Jainism. In addition to abstinence from meat-eating as a result of the Jain principle of *ahinsa* or non-violence, Akbar appreciated the Jain doctrine of *karma* or action which told that man's happiness or sadness lies in his actions, it is not the God that causes them. On one hand, the Jains utilized Akbar as a binding force to prevent the proliferation and deviation within the Jain religious order. They desperately sought for imperial patronage and interconnecting of state and religion to raise their status and to be in a better position in dealing with the local provincial authorities for smooth functioning of their business. They also wanted to use their connection with the Mughal Empire as a cementing agent to unite various warring sections of the sect.<sup>338</sup> On the other hand, the adventurous emperor wanted to win the support of Jains — *Shravakas* who were master businessmen. They always provided the state men, money and resources.<sup>339</sup> Thus, the nature of this relationship was reciprocal. Despite that, Akbar carved out for himself an enduring good name in the Jain tradition.

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<sup>336</sup> Aghar Chand Nahta, *Aitihāsik Jain Kavya Sangrah*, pp. 58-78, quoted by Pushpa Prasad, op. cit., p. 106.

<sup>337</sup> Pushpa Prasad, op. cit., p. 107.

<sup>338</sup> Shirin Mehta, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>339</sup> M.J. Mehta, *Merchants and Sharaf of Gujarat*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 5.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **FIRST HALF OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY: CONTINUATION OF THE POLICIES OF AKBAR**

The nature of the state during the first half of the seventeenth century remained very much the same as was instituted by Akbar, i.e. liberal in character, "though with a few lapses under Jahangir, and with some modifications by Shah Jahan."<sup>1</sup> So, in other words, the Mughal state headed by first Jahangir and then by Shah Jahan, like the preceding fifty years, remained the vital vehicle in providing amicable relationship between the two major communities of India, viz. Hindus and Muslims during the period under review.

#### **3.1 THE RELIGIOUS WORLD OF JAHANGIR**

At the beginning of Jahangir's reign, there was anticipation in the orthodox circle that Akbar's policy of *Sulh i-Kul* and religious eclecticism would be abandoned and supremacy of the *Shariat* restored. "When Akbar died in 1605, the orthodox elements in the court were strong enough to foil the Rajput scheme of putting Khusraw on the throne and to secure a promise from Jahangir that he would restore the institutions of Islam which had fallen into abeyance under Akbar."<sup>2</sup> The assertion frequently made that Jahangir gave any kind of assurance to protect Islam at the time of his accession is based exclusively on the account of the Jesuits who relied merely upon rumor for it.<sup>3</sup> The Jesuit fathers were not alone in the inference that a new dawn had come for Islam. Nimatullah, writing in 1613, in a passage on Jahangir's accession, says,

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<sup>1</sup> Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire*, New Delhi, 2001, p. 247.

<sup>2</sup> Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent (610-1947)*, Delhi, 1985, p. 166.

<sup>3</sup> C.H. Payne, *Akbar and the Jesuits*, p. 204; *Jahangir and the Jesuits*, p. 3.

"The Prophet's Law (*Shariat i-Nabawi*) which had withered like a red flower by the winter wind, obtained renewal at the accession of the king of Islam and mosques, hospices and *madrasas* which for thirty years had become the homes of beasts and birds, and from which no calls for prayer were heard by any one, [became] clean and cleansed, and the Prophetic call to prayer reached the sky; moreover all directions and prohibitions and the Rules of Islam as current among the people are enforced."<sup>4</sup>

On the contrary, such evidences are vast which show that Jahangir made no particular commitment to the orthodox Muslims. Jahangir was not an orthodox—neither by temperament nor by training. In addition to his own liking of drinking which he carried to excess—he tells that before the time of his taking over the throne, he had reduced his intake of wine from twenty cups of double distilled spirit (brandy) to five and that too at night only.<sup>5</sup> When he visited Babur's tomb at Kabul in his second Regnal Year (1607), he found a basin which could contain two Hindustani maunds of wine. Jahangir ordered another such a basin to be built, and every day he ordered to fill both the basins with wine and gave it to the servants who were present there.<sup>6</sup> Jahangir felt free to invite his nobles and others to join him in wine-drinking. One such noble was Amir Saiyid Abul Ula Akbarabadi who was a descendant of Khwaja Ubaidullah Ahrar, the famous Naqshbandi saint of Central Asia. Although a saint, he was also in the service of Akbar as a *mansabdar*. Jahangir is said to have been very deeply impressed by his administrative caliber, scholarship and piety. He allowed him to visit his court and even his private chambers at any time without prior permission. Once Abul Ula visited Jahangir during a festival and found him drinking wine. The emperor offered him a cup which he declined. When Jahangir insisted, he took the cup and threw on the ground. Thereupon

<sup>4</sup> Nimatullah, *Tarikh i-Khan Jahani*, ed., S.M. Imam al-Din, 2 vols., Dacca, 1960, II, p. 668, quoted in M. Athar Ali, *Mughal India: Studies in Polity, Ideas, Society, and Culture*, ed., Irfan Habib, New Delhi, 2007, p. 185.

<sup>5</sup> *The Tuzuk i-Jahangiri*, tr. A. Rogers and H. Beveridge, I, Delhi, rep. edn., 2006, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108-09.

Jahangir asked him with anger whether he was afraid of imperial wrath or not, to which Amir replied courageously that he was only afraid of divine wrath, the *Qahr i-Ilahi*.<sup>7</sup> Such a mischievous and notorious offering to a Sufi who was renowned for his piety shows Jahangir's 'respect' for the wine only! Some historians criticize "the fashion... to paint Jahangir as a besotted drunkard caring little for the government or for religion" and that "one has only to read his memoirs to see that this picture was overdrawn."<sup>8</sup> But in the light of aforementioned example, such a view can't be accepted. As far as Jahangir's *Memoirs* is concerned, it is "addresses what is largely a Persian-reading Muslim audience."<sup>9</sup> Therefore, it was unavoidable for him to try to touch their feelings and to seek to establish an identity with them.

In the Twelve Edicts which Jahangir issued at the time of his accession to the throne, slaughter of animals was forbidden on two days of every week, Thursday, the day of his accession, and Sunday, the day of Akbar's birthday and because "it is the day attributed to the sun and the day on which the creation of the world was begun."<sup>10</sup> Killing of animals was also prohibited on the 18<sup>th</sup> of Rabi ul-Awwal every year, Jahangir's birthday.<sup>11</sup>

Jahangir's attitude approving Akbar's policy of *Sulh i-Kul* and of giving respect and freedom to all religions is evident in his *Memoirs*. He says, "The professors of various faiths had room in the broad expanse of [my father's] incomparable sway. This was different from the practice in other realms [of the world], for in Persia there is room for Shias only, and in Turkey, India and Turan there is room for Sunnis only. As in the wide expanse of the Divine compassion there is room for all classes and the followers of all creeds, so, on the principle that the Shadow must have the same properties as the Light, in his

<sup>7</sup> Iqbal Sabir, 'Jahangir's Relations with the Contemporary Ulema and Sufis', in S. Iraqi, ed., *Medieval India 2: Essays in Medieval Indian History and Culture*, New Delhi, 2008, p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, op. cit., p. 166.

<sup>9</sup> M. Athar Ali, op. cit., p. 188.

<sup>10</sup> The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, tr. W.M. Thackston, New York, 1999, p. 26.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

[Akbar's] dominions, limited on all sides only by the salt sea, there was room for the followers of opposite religions, and for beliefs good and bad, and the road to altercation was closed. Sunnis and Shias met in one mosque, and Franks and Jews in one church, and observed their own forms of worship."<sup>12</sup>

Not only Jahangir followed Akbar's policy of *Sulh i-Kul* and showed respect to the religious beliefs of his father, he continued Akbar's policy of enrolling *iradat-gazinan/muridan* (disciples) and giving each of them *shast* (girdle) and *shabih* (portrait on medallion).<sup>13</sup> The grant of *shast* and *shabih* was part of the ritual of discipleship initiated by Akbar. The *shast* was a girdle carrying the *shabih* or medallion bearing the emperor's portrait with the formula *Allaho Akbar* (God is Great). The disciple had to put upon these with the headgear. At the time of initiation, the disciples were advised by the emperor to avoid communal enmity, and to follow the path of universal/absolute peace with all persons of the various creeds. They were also advised not to kill any living being with their own hands, honor the luminaries (sun, light etc.) which are the reflectors of God's light, and to dwell constantly upon God.<sup>14</sup> S.H. Hodiwala has shown that the so-called 'portrait *mohurs*' of Jahangir are exactly the medallions mentioned above.<sup>15</sup> He draws our attention to a unique medallion bearing the bust of Akbar with the invocation *Allaho Akbar*. The year given is 1 Regnal Year and 1014 A.H. (1605-06 A.D.), which means that this medallion was made just after Jahangir's accession. On the reverse side is a radiated sun, symbol of the respect for the sun, an important aspect of Akbar's religious views recognized by Jahangir. Hodiwala says that this medallion depicts Jahangir's anxiety to "attract the sympathy or enlist the support of his father's amirs and other influential members of the Ilahi Faith."<sup>16</sup> "The fact that he [Jahangir] continued to have medallions made, substituting his own portrait

<sup>12</sup> The Tuzuk i-Jahangiri, tr. Rogers and Beveridge, I, p. 37.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 60-61.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>15</sup> S.H. Hodiwala, Historical Studies in Mughal Numismatics, Bombay, 1976, pp. 147-70.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 152-53.

for that of his father, in all later issues, and presenting them to favoured courtiers... shows that his acceptance of Akbar's religious views was no passing fancy or diplomatic manoeuvre, but a conviction sincerely held."<sup>17</sup>

Jahangir not only continued to celebrate various Hindu festivals, e.g. Diwali,<sup>18</sup> Dashahra,<sup>19</sup> Rakshabandhan<sup>20</sup> etc. at his court, but also participated along with many of the nobles in them. Jahangir himself took part in a bout of gambling that continued for three nights during the celebrations of Diwali.<sup>21</sup> Nauroz, which was an old Central Asian festival as also the festival of the Parsis, was observed with music and joy for nineteen days.<sup>22</sup> "These practices were a public declaration of a policy of religious freedom to all. They also provided opportunity for greater social interaction between the ruler and his officials with people of various religious persuasions."<sup>23</sup> Regarding the coexistence of Hindus and Muslims in his empire, Jahangir advances a clever argument in an early draft of the *Tuzuk* where he says, "I ordered that, with this exception (prohibition of forcible *sati*), they (the Hindus) may follow whatever is their prescribed custom, and none should exercise force or compulsion or oppression over others. Since God the Almighty has made me shadow of God, and just as God's grace is extended to all creatures, God's shadow too must also be the same. It is impossible to carry out a general slaughter. Five-sixths of the people of Hindustan are idol-worshipping Hindus. Most of the work of agriculture, cloth-weaving and crafts is in their hands. If we try to make all of them Muslims that is not possible except by killing them, which too is impossible. God the Almighty will judge at the Day of Judgement. What have

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<sup>17</sup> M. Athar Ali, op. cit., p. 187.

<sup>18</sup> The *Tuzuk i-Jahangiri*, tr. Rogers and Beveridge, I, p. 268.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., I, p. 245; II, pp. 38, 100, 101, 176.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., I, p. 246.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., I, p. 268.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., I, pp. 48-49.

<sup>23</sup> Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 249.

I to do with the religious practices of the world?"<sup>24</sup> Here the line of argument has two-fold. The first part is in agreement with the official doctrine under Akbar: the sovereign as God's vicegerent, treats all with equal hands, just as God makes nature's gifts available to all irrespective of their faith. But, in the second part the 'impracticality of intolerance' is stressed just to persuade the Muslim audience of the *Tuzuk*.<sup>25</sup> However, interestingly, in the standard version of his *Memoirs*, Jahangir omits this passage altogether.

Jahangir's same approach in placating his readers and trying to "exalt his status as powerful Sultan who could suppress an infidel sect"<sup>26</sup> is evident in his dealings with the Sikh Guru Arjan and the banishment of Jain monks. As far as death of Guru Arjan in 1606 is concerned, Jahangir says, "There was a Hindu named Arjan in Gobindwal on the banks of the Beas River. Pretending to be a spiritual guide, he had won over as devotees many simple-minded Indians [Hindus] and even some ignorant, stupid Muslims by broadcasting his claims to be a saint. They called him *guru*... For a long time I had been thinking that either this false trade should be eliminated or that he should be brought into the embrace of Islam. At length, when Khusraw passed by there, this inconsequential little fellow wished to pay homage to Khusraw. When Khusraw stopped at his residence, [Arjan] came out and had an interview with [Khusraw]. Giving him elementary spiritual precepts picked up here and there, he made a mark with saffron on his forehead, which he called *qashqa* (i.e. *tika*) in the idiom of the Hindus and which they consider lucky. When this was reported to me, I realized how perfectly false he was and ordered him brought to me. I awarded his houses and dwellings and those of his children to Murtaza

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<sup>24</sup> Riza Library, Rampur, MS 175, *Tarikh i-Farsi*, CAS in History (Aligarh) Library Transcript, p. 22, quoted in M. Athar Ali, op. cit., p. 188.

<sup>25</sup> M. Athar Ali, op. cit., p. 188.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

Khan, and I ordered his possessions and goods confiscated and him executed."<sup>27</sup>

This statement occurs almost immediately after Jahangir's accession and in the context of Khusrau's rebellion. Jahangir doesn't tell that precisely when he had considered taking action against the Guru. If it was during Akbar's reign, it is well known that Akbar had favoured Guru Amar Das and made a visit to him at Goindwal.<sup>28</sup> Initially the Guru declined to accept any favour but eventually, a grant of several villages in and around the present city of Amritsar was accepted in the name of the Guru's daughter Bibi Bhani. The Sikh Religion found fresh estimation of the people when Akbar visited Guru Arjan Dev, and on his request remitted the revenue of the Punjab for one year.<sup>29</sup> This cordial relationship between Akbar and Guru Arjan didn't prompt Jahangir to take any action against the Guru during Akbar's lifetime. If after his accession Jahangir thought of punishing the Guru, the period had to be very brief because Khusrau rebelled hardly six months after his accession. Thus, this stance appears to be a deliberate attempt on Jahangir's part trying to make happy the orthodox sections.

It has been argued on the basis of evidences supplied by the Jesuits and the author of *Dabistan i-Mazahib*, including the later Sikh traditions reproduced by Macauliffe,<sup>30</sup> that Jahangir didn't order the execution of Guru Arjan but only imposed a heavy fine on him which he refused to pay, and it was due to the severe tortures inflicted upon him to realize the fine that he died. Nevertheless, this doesn't absolve Jahangir from the accusation of awarding excessive punishment to a highly revered saint for an unintentional error, with whom his father was on an amiable relationship. "Jahangir's action against Guru Arjan had at its cause political despotism, not religious persecution... This does not

<sup>27</sup> The Jahangirnama, tr. W.M. Thackston, p. 59.

<sup>28</sup> Indubhushan Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa: The Foundation of the Sikh Panth*, vol. 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Calcutta, 1963, p. 171.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 213-14.

<sup>30</sup> See M. Athar Ali, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-90 for a full discussion.



absolve him of opportunism; but that is a sin different from the one he owns himself, trying to win glory for Islam by force."<sup>31</sup>

One can reach similar conclusions while reading Jahangir's passage on the expulsion of Jain monks in 1617-18. He says, "The Sewras (i.e. Jain monks) are a group of Indian heretics who always go about stark naked... The Banya cast considers them their guide and masters but they don't bow to them or venerate them... The Sewra sect is found throughout India, but they are mostly in Gujarat because the commerce there is generally in the hands of the Banya. Aside from idol temples, they have built houses for them to dwell in and worship in, but they are actually abodes of abomination to which they send their wives and daughters to the Sewras. There is no shame or modesty and all sorts of abominations and lewdness are perpetrated. I therefore issued an order for the expulsion of the Sewras, and decrees [*farmans*] were dispatched in all directions for the Sewras to be expelled from the realm wherever they may be."<sup>32</sup> Apart from the complete nudity of these Jain monks, Jahangir attributes his *farmans* to reports of scandal and obscenity (probably involvement in licentious practices of these monks with the wives and daughters of the Banyas). But what Jahangir purposely omits to tell anywhere is that the *farman* was actually withdrawn, for which the evidence is furnished by the Jain work *Vijaytilak Suri Ras*, written by Darshanvijay in 1622-40.<sup>33</sup> This order doesn't show that Jahangir was hostile to Jainism as a religion. On the contrary, the Jain literature furnishes us altogether different account. It tells that as early as Akbar's reign (1589) there were two Jain monks, Vinaydev and Vijaydev at Salim's princely court.<sup>34</sup> Bhanu Chandra and other Jain monks attended Akbar's court as well as Jahangir's.<sup>35</sup> Kalyansagar Suri was granted interview by

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<sup>31</sup> M. Athar Ali, op. cit., p. 190.

<sup>32</sup> The Jahangirnama, tr. W.M. Thackston, pp. 250-51.

<sup>33</sup> For the work, see D.N. Marshall, *Mughals in India: A Bibliographical Survey*, vol. I, New York, 1967, p. 130, no. 406.

<sup>34</sup> Manjirishi, *Vinaydev Suri Ras*, Marshall, op. cit., p. 285, no. 1029.

<sup>35</sup> Siddhi Chandra, *Bhanu Chandra Charit*, Marshall, op. cit., pp. 449-50, no. 1721 (ii).

Jahangir at his court;<sup>36</sup> a Jain master had a disputed Jain work referred to him by Jahangir for decision.<sup>37</sup> Siddhi Chandra Upadhyay, the famous Jain savant, was granted the title of *Khush Faham* (Of Good Understanding) by Jahangir.<sup>38</sup> An order of Jahangir survives, prohibiting animal slaughter in Gujarat during the sacred days of the Jains.<sup>39</sup> If Jahangir and Khurram were being seen as hostile by the Jains, the Jain records wouldn't contain 'faithful portraits of Jahangir and Khurram.'<sup>40</sup>

Jahangir's unfavorable statement about the Jains and his boastful claims of having banished their monks is affected by a sense of vainglory. It also shows his desperate desire to elevate himself in the eyes of his readers as a mighty monarch who could curb an infidel sect which was twice as condemned for heresy and scandal. Facts were, therefore, accordingly tailored to suit the purpose. And this demonstrates also a shortcoming of the *Tuzuk* as a historical source, i.e. "the memoirs in themselves, though the basic text for our knowledge about Jahangir's views, are not a sufficient source."<sup>41</sup>

Two aspects of Jahangir's attitude towards Hinduism need to be discerned—his tolerance of beliefs and practices associated with it (i.e. his state policy) and his own personal views about their veracity and accuracy. While no water-tight compartmentalization can be made between the two, it should be comprehended that personal ideas and beliefs didn't always decide state policies.

With reference to the first, Jahangir makes obvious his approach in the passage we have already seen, given in an early version of his memoirs. Except for forcible *sati*, the Hindus were to be left free to follow their beliefs and

<sup>36</sup> Udaysagar Suri, Kalyansagar Suri Ras, Marshall, op. cit., p. 469, no. 1804.

<sup>37</sup> Kripasagar, Nemivijay Nirvan Ras, composed in 1617, Marshall, op. cit., p. 265, no. 938.

<sup>38</sup> Siddhi Chandra, Vasavdatta Vivaran, Marshall, op. cit., p. 449, no. 1721 (i).

<sup>39</sup> H. Sastri, ed., Ancient Vijnaptipatras, Baroda, 1942, cited by Marshall, op. cit., p. 221, no. 777.

<sup>40</sup> Marshall, op. cit., p. 221, no. 777. S.R. Sharma, Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., New Delhi, 1988, p. 67 suggests that Shah Jahan (Prince Khurram) out of his 'orthodoxy' might have been behind the order issued against the Jain monks.

<sup>41</sup> M. Athar Ali, op. cit., p. 192.

customs. The author of *Dabistan i-Mazahib* goes further and tells that Jahangir employed a judicial authority to deal with disputes among Hindus. It says, "His Majesty Nur ud-Din Muhammad Jahangir appointed Sri Kant to the office of *qazi* (judge) of the Hindus so that they might be at ease and be in no need to seek favour from a Muslim."<sup>42</sup>

Jahangir continued and even extended Akbar's policy of gifts and grants to Brahmans and temples. In his first Regnal Year (1605-06), while against Khusrau, he gave large sums of money to Shaikh Fazlullah and Raja Dhirdhar to be distributed among *faqirs* and Brahmans.<sup>43</sup> In 1621, Jahangir deviated from his way to visit Hardwar, "one of the most famous places of worship of the Hindus, and many Brahmans and recluses have chosen a corner of retirement in this place and worship God according to the rule of their religion."<sup>44</sup> There he distributed gifts both in cash and kind to each of them according to their deserts.<sup>45</sup> Documents in the possession of the Vrindavan temples of the Chaitanya sect show how Jahangir went on adding to the grants of both the temples and their devotees. He converted Todar Mal's temporary grant to Madan Mohan temple into a permanent imperial grant in 1613. In 1613 and 1614 he added at least two more temples to the list of temple-recipients in Akbar's *farman* of 1598. During the period 1612-15, Jahangir made at least five new grants to Chaitanya priests at Vrindavan.<sup>46</sup>

Jahangir had, however, distinct views about certain matters of religion and these didn't fit in with popular Hinduism. He was critical of the theory of incarnation (*hulul*) and of image-worship. Describing a discussion with the Pundits, he argued that God, who is infinite, cannot be limited to particular space ('length, width and depth') in ten different bodies (presumably, Vishnu's

<sup>42</sup> *Dabistan i-Mazahib*, Bombay edn., pp. 153-54, quoted by M. Athar Ali, op. cit., p. 193.

<sup>43</sup> *The Tuzuk i-Jahangiri*, tr. Rogers and Beveridge, I, p. 58.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 218.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Tarapada Mukherjee and Irfan Habib, 'The Mughal Administration and the Temples of Vrindavan During the Reigns of Jahangir and Shahjahan', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 49<sup>th</sup> Session, Dharwad, 1988, pp. 288-89.

incarnations); nor, if His presence is seen as that of divine light, then it is equal in all existing things and not peculiar to these ten bodies; nor can this be the revelation of divine attributes in particular frames only, for miraculous powers have been possessed by men in every religion. The Brahmans responded that since their minds are incapable of comprehending an abstract essence without the intermediary of form, they have made these ten bodies a means by which they know and recognize the deity.<sup>47</sup> Jahangir couldn't, however, agree that such forms could assist in the devotee's realization of God.<sup>48</sup> Jahangir's disagreement with the theory of incarnation and of image-worship is reflected in his revulsion to the *varah* (boar) incarnation of Vishnu. In 1613 while hunting at Pushkar, he was astonished to see an idol made of carved black stone that "from the neck up had the shape of a pig's head, while the rest resembled a man's body." He ordered "the hideous thing smashed and thrown into the [Pushkar] tank."<sup>49</sup> This move also seems to be affected by the idea of considering the pig impure in Islam, because none of the other temples dedicated to Vishnu were harmed. His lack of sympathy to image-worship is also reflected in his uncomplimentary comments on the temples of Vrindavan which he visited in 1619,<sup>50</sup> though, as we have seen, he conferred on grants to these very temples. After the victory in the Kangra campaign, Jahangir claimed that "things done in [his] presence that had not previously been done there since the bastion was built, like the call for prayer, reciting the *khutba*, slaughtering a cow etc."<sup>51</sup> After the thanksgiving prayers "for this gift [victory in the campaign], which no previous monarch had achieved" Jahangir ordered a mosque to be erected inside the fortress.<sup>52</sup> This action of Jahangir "was a political act to set the seal on the conquest of a long-defiant fortress. It meant no

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<sup>47</sup> The Jahangirnama, tr. W.M. Thackston, p. 36.

<sup>48</sup> The Tuzuk i-Jahabgiri, tr. Rogers and Beveridge, I, p. 33.

<sup>49</sup> The Jahangirnama, tr. W.M. Thackston, p. 153.

<sup>50</sup> The Tuzuk i-Jahangiri, tr. Rogers and Beveridge, II, p. 104.

<sup>51</sup> The Jahangirnama, tr. W.M. Thackston, p. 374.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

change in his religious policy.”<sup>53</sup> From Kangra, Jahangir went to the Durga temple at Jwalamukhi. There he noted that besides “the miserable infidels who worship idols, hordes of Muslim folk traverse vast distances to offer vows and seek blessings by worshiping this black stone.”<sup>54</sup> No attempt on Jahangir’s part was made to put a stop to this practice.

Evidently, Jahangir’s chief area of interest in religion was panentheism. It was this interest which made him seek the company of the famous Qadiri Sufi and friend of Guru Arjan, Miyan Mir in 1620. At the emperor’s invitation he visited his camp and overwhelmed Jahangir through his mystical discourse. The emperor was so impressed with Miyan’s asceticism that he dared not to present him with any gift except for the skin of a white antelope to pray upon.<sup>55</sup> Among Hindu divines, Jahangir found the greatest satisfaction in the votaries of Vedanta which he calls “the science of *tasawwuf*.”<sup>56</sup> In this search, he met Jadrup Gosain in the eleventh year of his reign (1616-17). Perhaps Jadrup is the personality in Jahangir’s memoirs praised in the most eulogized manner after Akbar. His mode of life found an enthusiastic description in the memoirs. Jahangir met him in Ujjain on his way to Gujarat recalling that “my exalted father [Akbar]... also paid him a visit in this very place [Ujjain] and often mentioned it with fondness.”<sup>57</sup> On his return journey in 1618 he went and saw him twice and realized that “certainly association with him is a great privilege.”<sup>58</sup> Again he met him twice next year in Mathura.<sup>59</sup> When Hakim Beg, brother-in-law of Nur Jahan, who held the charge of Mathura, ill-treated Jadrup, Jahangir dismissed him immediately from service.<sup>60</sup> Unfortunately, it is not recorded by the emperor what were the exact topics of discussion besides

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<sup>53</sup> Irfan Habib, ‘The Political Role of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Waliullah’, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 23<sup>rd</sup> Session, Aligarh, 1960, Part I, p. 215.

<sup>54</sup> The Jahangirnama, tr. W.M. Thackston, p. 374.

<sup>55</sup> The Tuzuk i-Jahangiri, tr. A. Rogers and H. Beveridge, II, p. 119.

<sup>56</sup> The Jahangirnama, tr. W.M. Thackston, p. 209.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> The Tuzuk i-Jahandiri, tr. Rogers and Beveridge, II, p. 49.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 104, 105.

<sup>60</sup> Farid Bhakkari, Shaikh, Dhakhirat ul-Khawanin, tr. Z.A. Desai, vol. II, New Delhi, 2003, p. 101.

the general principles of Vedanta, for Jahangir speaks in broader terms of “lofty statements about Gnostic truths and... the fundamentals of mysticism”<sup>61</sup> received from him and praises his “fine understanding, elevated mind, and quick comprehension together with knowledge”<sup>62</sup> which the Almighty has bestowed upon him. Summing up the cause of Jadrup’s “great reputation” and also of his great impression upon himself, Jahangir says, “He has freed his heart from attachments of material things and turned his back on the world and everything in it, seated in a corner by himself in need of no one and nothing.”<sup>63</sup>

Professor John F. Richard’s view that Jahangir was “persistently hostile to popularly venerated religious figures”<sup>64</sup> should be seen in the contemporary political conditions. Akbar made the Mughal Empire a paramount power which remained the same till the death of Aurangzeb. It was so that, it appears, Jahangir only took action against religious figures whose deeds he saw as threats to the state. This included the Naqshbandi Muslim Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, whom Jahangir viewed as an extremist (and who was a noted enemy of Guru Arjan),<sup>65</sup> and so had him imprisoned in Gwalior fort.<sup>66</sup> Jahangir didn’t show hostility to Shaikh Ahmad for his denunciation of *wahdat ul-wajud* and supporting *wahdat ush-shuhud* but for his frenzies of mind resulting “uproar among the common folk.”<sup>67</sup> Nor was Jahangir likely to be personally familiar with Guru Arjan, since he labelled the Guru as a ‘Hindu.’<sup>68</sup> As we have seen, Jahangir showed deepest respect to popularly venerated religious figures, e.g. Miyan Mir and Jadrup Gosain for they didn’t even try to impose any type of threat to the functioning or stability of the state.

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<sup>61</sup> The Jahangirnama, tr. W.M. Thackston, p. 285.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 313.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> J.F. Richards, The Mughal Empire, Cambridge, 1993, p. 97.

<sup>65</sup> See Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi’s jubilant letter to Murtaza Khan after receiving the news of Guru Arjan’s death, quoted in M. Athar Ali, op. cit., p. 189.

<sup>66</sup> The Jahangirnama, tr. W.M. Thackston, p. 304.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

Like his father, Jahangir also had an elevated notion about sovereignty. He says, "... acts of sovereignty and world rule are not things to be arranged by the worthless endeavours of defective intellects. The just Creator bestows them on him whom He considers fit for this glorious and exalted duty and on such a person doth He fit the robe of honour."<sup>69</sup> The state was, for Jahangir, not only to be a liberal institution but to be marked by munificence and justice. The munificent aspect was emphasized by Jahangir in issuing the Twelve Edicts following his accession.<sup>70</sup> His golden chain of justice has become a legend to be repeated here.<sup>71</sup> The chain was set up as a link between his people and Jahangir himself. Standing outside the castle of Agra with sixty bells, anyone was capable of pulling the chain and having a personal hearing from Jahangir himself. Only one instance of Jahangir's emphasis on justice irrespective of one's position may be mentioned. A widow complained that Muqarrab Khan, the governor of Gujarat, had taken her daughter by force at Cambay, and kept her in his house, and when she enquired about the girl, he said that she had died by an unavoidable death. After an enquiry ordered by Jahangir, one of Muqarrab's attendants was found guilty. He was put to death; the *mansab* of Muqarrab Khan was reduced by half, and he was made to make an allowance to the widow.<sup>72</sup>

Similar to Akbar, Jahangir paid the same respect to the shrine of Khwaja Muin ud-Din Chishti since he ascribed his birth owing to the blessings of the exalted saint. For three years, i.e. from 1613 to 1616, he stayed at Ajmer. "During this period he regularly visited the shrine, presided many *mahfils* held during *urs* and on every Thursday, and introduced a number of Mughal court etiquettes and cultural activities there... He also offered a golden railing around the *mazar*, and issued a gold coin bearing the novel inscription of *Ya Moin* on it.

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<sup>69</sup> The Tuzuk i-Jahangiri, tr. Rogers and Beveridge, I, p. 51.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-10.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

He also presented a *deg* (cauldron) and distributed with his own hands, the food cooked in it, performed the ritual of candle lighting and distributing cash and kind rewards to many recluses and also offered *nazar* to the *Khuddams*.<sup>73</sup>

In civil cases, Islamic law applied to Muslims, Hindu law applied to Hindus, while criminal law was the same for both Muslims and Hindus. We have seen Jahangir appointed Sri Kant of Kashmir to the office of *qazi* of the Hindus. In matters like marriage and inheritance, both communities had their own laws that Jahangir respected. Thus, Jahangir was able to deliver justice to people in accordance with their beliefs, and also keep his hold on empire by a unified criminal law.

Despite his persistent emphasis on justice and his benevolence, the Mughal emperor remained a despot which was not an unusual thing owing to the circumstances of the medieval period. The medieval state was invariably despotism. Thus, Jahangir had no guilt in summarily executing a *jilaudar* (groom) and stringing two *kahars* (water carriers) whose sudden appearance had enabled a *nilgai* (blue bull) to get away which he was hunting.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, "liberalism and autocratic benevolence were underpinned by a policy of cultural pluralism, enabling people of all religions and regions to contribute. These included not only architecture and gardening, but music, painting, literature etc."<sup>75</sup>

### 3.2 THE RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT UNDER SHAH JAHAN: CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY PRINCE DARA SHIKOH

It has been argued whether Shah Jahan continued the liberal policies of Akbar with some variations or he was "orthodox in his leanings as well as his beliefs and he took some measures to show that orthodoxy was back in

<sup>73</sup> S.L.H. Moini, *The Chishti Shrine of Ajmer: Pirs, Pilgrims, Practices*, Jaipur, 2004, p. 105.

<sup>74</sup> *The Tuzuk i-Jahangiri*, tr. Rogers and Beveridge, I, p. 164.

<sup>75</sup> Satish Chandra, *op. cit.*, p. 254.



power.”<sup>76</sup> Thus, Shah Jahan, after his accession in 1628, abolished the practice of *sijda* (prostration before the ruler) “which had been practiced during the reigns of the late Emperors Akbar and Jahangir”<sup>77</sup> and substituted it with *zamin-bos* (putting both hands on the ground and touching them to the forehead). Later, in 1637 the ceremony of *zamin-bos* was also abolished, but “the three successive obeisances, which were always made as an acknowledgement of any sign of the royal regard, were augmented to four (*chahar-taslim*).”<sup>78</sup> Neither of the moves can be said to any kind of reversal to the orthodoxy because Jahangir in his sixth Regnal Year (1611) exempted Mir i-Adl and Qazi “who are the pivot of affairs of the divine law” from *sijda*.<sup>79</sup> Shah Jahan discouraged and banned the practice of mixed marriages between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir and throughout the Punjab in 1634. It meant that “if any infidel had a Musalman wife in his house, he would be allowed to retain possession of her solely on condition of his embracing Islam and being united in lawful wedlock according to the prescribed forms.”<sup>80</sup> As a result, the inhabitants of Bhimbar [now the largest town of Bhimbar district, Pak-administered Kashmir] numbering about 5000 with their tribe-head<sup>81</sup> and Gujrat<sup>82</sup> [presently a city, the capital of Gujrat district in the Punjab province of Pakistan] were converted to Islam. Later, this order was extended throughout the Punjab, resulting to the conversion of about 400 Hindus.<sup>83</sup> Two idol temples also were razed to the ground and mosques erected in their stead; and seven other mosques were wrested from their unlawful proprietors.<sup>84</sup> Earlier in 1633, the Christians captured from port Hugli, Bengal were asked to accept Islam; those who did not were put into prison.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> I.H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent*, p. 178.

<sup>77</sup> *The Shah Jahan Nama of Inayat Khan*, tr. A.R. Fuller, New Delhi, 1990, p. 18.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>79</sup> *The Tuzuk i-Jahangiri*, tr. Rogers and Beveridge, I, p. 203.

<sup>80</sup> *The Shah Jahan Nama of Inayat Khan*, tr., p. 139.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

There is also a reference of forced conversion of Hindus towards the close of Shah Jahan's reign. In 1656 the inhabitants of Darra Tangi, situated in Jalalabad and eleven neighbouring villages gained "their release from the gloom of paganism by affirming their adherence to the glorious creed."<sup>86</sup> In this case, the motive seems to be political because it is told that these people were "renowned for their rebelliousness"<sup>87</sup> and converting them was a part of their suppression.

Perhaps, Shah Jahan took the most significant step in his sixth Regnal year (1633), he ordered that no temple whose foundation had been laid in former reigns (i.e. in Jahangir's time) but had not been completed would be allowed to be completed. Accordingly, 70 recently-built temples at Banaras were demolished.<sup>88</sup> Temples and churches were also destroyed during wars. During the Bundela rebellion, Bir Singh Deo's temple at Orchha was destroyed in 1635.<sup>89</sup> Christian churches at Hugli were destroyed during the clash with the Europeans there.<sup>90</sup> It doesn't, however, seem that Shah Jahan tried to implement seriously any policy of temple-destruction and not allowing new temples to be built. Professor I.H. Qureshi is right in his assessment that "such a rule [i.e. denying the permission of building new temples] could not be imposed with any thoroughness in an overwhelmingly Hindu region and was more an assertion of a principle than an effective measure... [it] was more a declaration that Islam would again be treated as the dominant religion rather than an attempt at the suppression of Hinduism."<sup>91</sup> This notion is confirmed by some documents from Vrindavan during the period of 1633-34. The grants of Madan Mohan temple and sister-temples were not only renewed during the period,<sup>92</sup> but the hindrance of some local officials pertaining to the ringing of the *gharial*

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 516.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., pp. 89-90.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>91</sup> I.H. Qureshi, op. cit., p. 178.

<sup>92</sup> Tarapada Mukharjee and Irfan Habib, 'The Mughal Administration and the Temples of Vrindavan During the Reigns of Jahangir and Shahjahan', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 49<sup>th</sup> Session, Dharwad, 1988, pp. 289-90.

(time-gong) at the Madan Mohan temple was condemned also in the most severe terms by an imperial *farman* of 29 November 1634.<sup>93</sup> The time-gong was permitted to be sounded again since "a large body of God-worshipping Hindu mendicants are engaged in divine worship according to their own religion and custom."<sup>94</sup> Here, the worship of the deity is described as "divine worship" (*ibadat i-ilahi*), and the image-worshippers are flatly described as "God-worshipping" (*Khuda-parast*)<sup>95</sup> a strange slip for an "infidel-consuming monarch, the guardian and defender of the true religion (i.e. Islam)." At this point there is no reference to the *Shariat* to justify the tolerance of an impiety, for the reason that it is not believed an impiety at all. The grants for Govind Dev temple, the other great temple of Vrindavan, were not only confirmed, but the management of the temple itself was handed over to the rulers of Amber.<sup>96</sup> From these details, it is evident that Shah Jahan for no reason intended to make any departure from the traditional policy of tolerance, founded by Akbar and continued by Jahangir.

The period of Shah Jahan, in a sense, reminds us of the time of Akbar as there was once again a movement to bridge the extant gap and to provide an ideological foundation demonstrating the affinity between Hinduism and Islam. The most fêted spokesperson of this trend was Prince Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Shah Jahan and heir-apparent. From an early age, Dara had immense interest in religious matters and he came into contact with many Muslim and Hindu mystics and gained knowledge of the devotional practices of the Sufis. "His association with them widened his outlook and helped him to grasp the essence of religion through intuitive perception without attaching any importance to the dogmatic formalism of Islam."<sup>97</sup> Among the saints of various orders, whose life Dara has noticed in his works, especially the *Safinat ul-Auliya*

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 290.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 290.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Bikrama Jit Hasrat, *Dara Shikuh: Life and Works*, New Delhi, 1982, p. 4.

and the *Sakinat ul-Auliya*, Miyan Mir (d. 1635) and his spiritual successor (*khalifa*) Mulla Shah Badakhshani (d. 1661) deserve special mention. Both were the most prominent figures of the Qadiriyya *silsilah*, with whom Dara was on most affectionate intimate terms. Both of them exercised an overwhelming influence over his mind and finally caused his initiation into the Qadiriyya order. It resulted in providing Dara much scope for his spiritual attainment and opening him the path of self-realisation and purity. His contacts with Muslim and Hindu mystics, viz. Shaikh Muhibbullah, Shah Dilruba, Shah Muhammad Lisanullah Rostaki, Baba Lal Das Bairagi and the famous scholar-saint Jagannath Mishra, "suggested to his mind the idea of establishing a sort of rapprochement between the apparently divergent principles of Islamic mysticism and Hindu philosophy."<sup>98</sup> His interest in Sufism progressively inclined him towards mystic system of other religions and by means of his association with the divines of various religious systems, Dara studied assiduously Hindu mythology, Gnosticism and Vedanta philosophy; and also the Psalms, the Gospel and Pentateuch.<sup>99</sup> It must be noted that Dara's leaning and approach towards Hinduism was neither due to a political motive to gain the throne of Delhi as the heir-apparent nor to become a popular monarch of both the Hindus and the Muslims as his great grandfather Akbar did. Dara's approach was that of an enquirer of truth, "in whose heart was a burning passion for knowledge, and who, irrespective of the basis of its source, eagerly sought it wherever he could find it."<sup>100</sup>

Dara's earlier studies were purely Sufistic in nature and were not extended to the mystic system of other religions. The *Safinat ul-Auliya*, Dara's first work on Sufism was completed in 1640. It is a biographical dictionary which lists all the significant Sufis, from the advent of Islam to the author's own

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

time and is divided into the eight sections,<sup>101</sup> headed by an illuminating preface. Dara Shikoh's second work, the *Sakinat ul-Auliya* was also a biographical work on saints. Unlike its predecessor that includes saints of diverse *silsilahs*, it is exclusively devoted to the saints of Qadiriyya order in India. It included an account of Miyan Mir, his sister Bibi Jamal Khatun and the disciples of Miyan. The description of Miyan Mir's disciples was covered under two heads, the first being of those who were departed, and the second of those who were alive at the completion of the work in 1642-43. The *Hasanat ul-Arifin* which is a supplementary work to the above two, appeared a little later in 1654. It gave a detailed explanation of the ecstatic aphorisms of mystics. It also included short notes on some Indian Sufis and Hindu saints not mentioned in the *Safinat ul-Auliya*. The *Risala i-Haq Numa*, completed in 1646-47, "marks the first advance of his [Dara's] religious thought towards the esoteric aspect of Islam."<sup>102</sup> In this he describes the four planes/spheres of existence, viz. the Physical World (*alam i-nasut*), the World of Angles (*alam i-malakut*), the World of Bliss (*alam i-jabarut*) and the World of Absolute Truth (*alam i-lahut*), denoting respectively the four states of human consciousness known as wakefulness (*jagrat*), dream (*swapn*), sleep (*sushupti*) and trans-consciousness (*samadhi*). Although Dara claims that the *Risala* records "without a hair's difference" the austere practices, meditations etc. of the holy Prophet, yet the description of the methods and internal significance of these practices have been borrowed, it seems, from the Yoga system. From this, we can deduce that Dara was "gradually moving towards the study of asceticism and the various stages of spiritual development and the ways and means of reaching the pitch of spiritual perfection."<sup>103</sup>

<sup>101</sup> See Bikrama Jit Hasrat, op. cit., pp. 53-56 and S.A.A. Rizvi, A History of Sufism in India, vol. II, New Delhi, 2002, p. 130 for details.

<sup>102</sup> Bikrama Jit Hasrat, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

Dr. Bikrama Jit Hasrat has suggested that the year 1056 A.H./1646-47 A.D. was a turning point in Dara Shikoh's studies in religion.<sup>104</sup> This year, he says, "marked the beginning of his [Dara's] examination of the system of various religions, but till 1062 A.H. he did not express his opinion."<sup>105</sup> This was approximately the same time [1063A.H./1653A.D.] when after returning from an unsuccessful campaign from Qandahar, Dara held conversations at Lahore with Baba Lal, a well-informed Vaishnavite mendicant. Baba Lal held dialogue with Dara on seven different occasions, during which he spoke in the Hindi dialect then used by ascetics in northern India. Discussions may also have been assisted by Rai Chandrabhan Brahman who later translated them into Persian under the title of *Nadir un-Nikat*.<sup>106</sup> Although the nature of these discourses is primarily religious, yet they slightly touch some topics on mysticism and pantheism. From the standpoint of comparative mythology the subjects dealt with are of extreme interest. The discussions reveal the inner soul of the prince who was able to perceive diverse religious tenets synthetically and was intensely interested in the science of comparative religion. "Baba Lal's ideas, and his personal contacts with Hindu saints, yogis and ascetics strengthened Dara Shikoh's own belief that the Absolute in the final analysis was one and the same, and merely expressed in different forms in different religions. The idea was not a new one and had previously been developed by Ibn Arabi, who had repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that the Absolute perpetually created new self-manifestations in the form of His different attributes."<sup>107</sup> Dara's such conviction prompted him to compose his next work of remarkable merit and originality, the *Majma ul-Bahrain* (Commingleing of the Two Oceans) in 1654-55, "wherein is made the first attempt of its own kind to reconcile the doctrines of

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., pp. 244-45, esp. fn. 17.

<sup>107</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 417.

*Brahma-Vidya* and the tenets of *al-Quran*.”<sup>108</sup> The work “though a treatise on the technical terms of Indian pantheism and their equivalents in Sufi phraseology, poor in spirit, largely verbal and devoid of any deep insight or great spirituality, it is a work of utmost interest to a student of comparative religion, as it embodies an attempt of its own kind to reconcile the doctrines of two apparently divergent religions. It tries to show the similarity and identity between Hinduism and Islam and brings out the points where the two oceans of religious thought meet.”<sup>109</sup> The Preface of the treatise is the most enlightening section. It opens with the claim that there is no fundamental difference between Hinduism and Islam. Furthermore, he observes that after ascertaining the true religion of the Sufis and after having the association and discussion with the doctors and perfect divines of the Hindu religion, he [Dara] did not find any difference except verbal (*lafzi*) in the way in which they sought to comprehend the Truth.<sup>110</sup> Dara’s instinctive approach towards the study of Indian religious thought and his aristocratic thinking even in the religious matters is evident in his claim that he had put down his researches (in comparative study) according to his own intuition and taste, for the benefit of the members of his family and that he had no concern with the common folk of either community.<sup>111</sup> It meant that his studies about Hinduism were neither academic nor intellectual nor, as some think, it had any political intention. This may be a possible reason of the dearth of insight, depth and sensitivity and being reading dryly of the work of Dara Shikoh (the *Majma ul-Bahrain*). By his aristocratic view Dara implied that an appropriate understanding of the subtleties of *Tasawwuf* in both Islamic Sufism and Hindu mysticism was the sole area of the upper class of both the religions. To silence the criticism of his Muslim enemies, Dara finished the introduction with a piercing quote from the celebrated Naqshbandi saint,

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<sup>108</sup> Bikrama Jit Hasrat, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., pp. 210, 220.

Khwaja Ubaidullah Ahrar: "If I know that an infidel, immersed in sin, is singing the note of *Tawhid* (monotheism), I go to him, hear him and am grateful to him."<sup>112</sup>

Dara's leanness, diligence and labour and his preparations during the process of familiarising himself with the tenets of Hinduism were finally culminated in his most ambitious enterprise – a translation of the Upanishads into Persian. This was completed in 1657 under the title *Sirr i-Akbar* (the Great Secret). Dara acknowledged the antiquity and superiority of the four *Vedas* "which without doubt or suspicion, is the first of all heavenly books, in point of time, the source of the fountain of the reality and the ocean of monotheism, in conformity with the holy Quran and a commentary thereupon."<sup>113</sup> Dara translated fifty-two Upanishads with extreme faithfulness. This he did in six months of time with the help of the pundits of Banaras which was soon followed by similar translations of the *Yoga Vashishtha* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*.<sup>114</sup> He was so excited by the Upanishads that he asserted that these were 'the hidden books' spoken of the Quran.<sup>115</sup> Elucidating his objective of translating these books, Dara blamed Hindu pundits and scholars for concealing the Upanishads from Muslims in an attempt to hide the subtle points of monotheism contained in these books and also to keep these books away from a large number of Hindus who were unaware of the mystical philosophy of the Upanishads. Consequently his translation, Dara believed, would open new doors to mystics interested in the *Wahdat ul-Wujud*, Hindu and Muslim alike.<sup>116</sup> All the same, "Dara struck an orthodox note in maintaining that his translation was to elucidate the Quran, not to diminish its significance,"<sup>117</sup> despite the fact

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 217; S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 418.

<sup>113</sup> Bikrama Jit Hasrat, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., pp. 8-9.

<sup>116</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 424.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.



that he "unconsciously applied Quranic terminology in the explanation of Hindu philosophical terms, in his translation of the Upanishads."<sup>118</sup>

This, however, doesn't lessen the Prince's sincerity of purpose and the enterprise to establish by comparative process that the ideas of Indian cosmogony and certain other aspects of the Vedanta philosophy as contained in the Upanishads are similar to those embodied in the Quran. This was but a humble beginning of an original line of investigation to demonstrate the fundamental harmony between the two great religions which if honestly pursued for the sake of the neglected commonality, may achieve great things in the present. His notion was that the ancient Indian philosophical thought was associated with the monotheistic ideals of Islam. This new principle "did not, however, aim to prove that the acceptance of each other's theories with regard to the religious practices of each is essential, but that the Truth in both the religions was linked with each other by its own underlying unity."<sup>119</sup> The previous one would certainly have significantly aroused in his mind, various controversial aspects of different established principles found in both the religions, which he could never have been able to harmonise even in the light of his new formula of underlying unity.<sup>120</sup> Dara didn't consider that the two great religions, familiar with each other for the last thousand years, stood apart absolutely irreconcilable. He placed religion on a broader foundation and tended to indicate a way to a better understanding of each other's ideas in a spirit of mutual goodwill. Ignoring the sectarian dogma or philosophical disputes, such an attempt left an intense impression in their wake. There exists to this day, a vital bond of cultural unity and it owes loyalty to Dara Shikoh's efforts which greatly harmonised the relations between the two communities and brush aside social and to some extent religious differences too.

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<sup>118</sup> Bikrama Jit Hasrat, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

Dara was a martyr—not a religious but a political one. He lost his battle as the heir-apparent to his more far-sighted and shrewd younger brother Aurangzeb in the war of succession not because of his eclectic and unorthodox views but for his inability in proving himself as a competent commander and administrator. "The struggle between Dara and Aurangzib was not really a trial of strength between Hinduism and Islam... If the triumph of Hinduism or of Islam had been the issue of the contest, the Sayyids of Barha would not have been the most faithful supporters of Dara, nor would Maharana Raj Singh have favoured the cause of Aurangzib... It was not Dara's heresy but his lack of worldly wisdom and tact that drove most of the self-seeking courtiers, both Muslim and Hindu, into the ranks of his rival's supporters."<sup>121</sup> A bad assessor of character and talent, Dara was both susceptible and naive. Even then, he continued to enjoy unlimited support from his affectionate father. His elder sister Jahan Ara Begum, who after the death of her mother was greatly valued by Shah Jahan and whose advice he valued highly, also gave Dara her unstinted support.

During the medieval period, being skilled in warfare and commanding the forces was the sole criteria to obtain the throne whereas Dara was well-versed in Sufism not in statecraft so his failure in the war was unavoidable. "Dara proved a failure in war and state-craft because he made them the secondary objects of his pursuit. He devoted the greater part of his time and energy to carry on a literary propaganda for the promotion of peace and concord between the better minds in Islam and Hinduism."<sup>122</sup> His obsession with Sufism also prevented him from preparing efficiently for the responsibility the designation of crown prince vested upon him. "It was Dara's fascination for mysticism and an irrevocable sense of his own destiny which hindered him from more assiduously preparing himself for the challenges and hazards which

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<sup>121</sup> K.R. Qanungo, *Dara Shikoh*, vol. I, Calcutta, 1952, pp. 146-47.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

his role as heir-apparent presented."<sup>123</sup> It was Dara's defeat and Aurangzeb's triumph in the war of succession and his haste in eliminating his chief political contender as soon as possible forced him to execute Dara. This act of political murder was justified by blaming Dara as a heretic and apostate in the official history of Aurangzeb, the *Alamgirnamah*. It reads, "Dara Shikuh in his later years did not restrict himself to free-thinking and heretical notions which he had adopted under the name of *tasawwuf*, but showed an inclination for the religion of the Hindus. He was constantly in the society of *Brahmans*, *Jogis* and *Sannyasis* and he used to regard these worthless teachers of delusion as learned and true masters of wisdom. He considered their books which they call *Bed* (Veda) as being the word of God and revealed from heaven, and he called them ancient and excellent books. He was under such delusion about this *Bed*, that he collected *Brahmans* and *Sannyasis* from all parts of the country, and paying them great respect and attention, he employed them in translating the *Bed*. He spent all his time in this unholy work, and devoted all his attention to the contents of these wretched books. Instead of the sacred name of God, he adopted the Hindu name *Prabhu* (lord), which the Hindus consider holy, and he had this name engraved in Hindi letters upon rings of diamond, ruby, emerald, etc... Through these perverted opinions he had given up the prayers, fasting and other obligations imposed by the law ... It became manifest that if Dara Shukuh obtained the throne and established his power, the foundations of the faith would be in danger and the precepts of Islam would be changed for the rant of Infidelity and Judaism."<sup>124</sup> The *ulema* issued the *fatwa* of capital punishment against the unorthodox Dara in the following words, "The pillars of Canonical Law and Faith apprehended many kinds of disturbance from his [Dara's] life. So, the Emperor, both out of necessity to protect the Faith and Holy Law, and

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<sup>123</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>124</sup> Muhammad Kazim in Elliot's translation, Vol. VII, p. 179.

also for the reasons of State, considered it unlawful to allow Dara to remain alive any longer as a destroyer of public peace."<sup>125</sup>

Dara was neither a heretic nor an apostate. "In all his works... there is not the slightest indication that he had renounced Islam and had become a Hindu, as is alleged by some authors. The very introductions to his works, which he has begun with the praise of God, the Prophet, his companions and descendants, will belie such presumption."<sup>126</sup> He was a member of the Qadiriyya *silsilah*, one of the most esteemed orders of Islamic mysticism. His *pir* Mulla Shah and Shah's *murshid* Miyan Mir were strict adherents to the *Shariat*. "Dara and Aurangzib were equally faithful to Islam; the former being true to the spirit only and the latter to the very letter of his religion. Each had his own idealism. Dara thought of rescuing the spirit of the Prophet's creed which was being crushed under the dead weight of the dogmatism of the *mullas*. His ambition was to supplant exoteric Islam by esoteric mysticism as a living moral force among the Muslim intellectuals. He appears in the role of a peace-maker between the Hindus and the Muslims; his task being to interpret to each community the highest truths of the religion of the other in a most intelligent and acceptable manner. Aurangzib was a militant pan-Islamist to whom the only solution of the quarrel of creeds appeared to be the conversion of the whole world to Islam. Dara and Aurangzib personify respectively the spirit of progress and of reaction."<sup>127</sup>

Although this spirit of progress ended tragically but even before this, Dara had secured a unique and outstanding place in the history of Sufism in India through his works on Sufism, his translation of the Upanishads and his sympathy for and understanding of Hindu mysticism. "The world has not

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<sup>125</sup> Alamgirnamah, quoted by K.R. Qanungo, op. cit., p. 228.

<sup>126</sup> Bikrama Jit Hasrat, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

<sup>127</sup> K.R. Qanungo, op. cit., pp. 271-72.

become richer in any way by the long reign of Aurangzib; but it would have been certainly poorer without a Dara Shikoh."<sup>128</sup>

It will be wrong to assume that Dara Shikoh's liberal outlook and fraternisation with Hindus became meaningless with the end of his life. During his lifetime, no doubt, he was ridiculed and denounced as an atheist, hypocrite, apostate, heretic, opportunist and devoid of all religions by the orthodox section of Islam but within a century of his martyrdom, the celebrated saint of the Naqshbandiyya order Mirza Mazhar Jan i-Janan was in a position to give the status of *ahl al-kitab* (people with a revealed book) to the Hindus,<sup>129</sup> thus, changed their status from *kafir* (infidel) to the people having a divine scripture as the Muslims, the Christians and the Jews.

It can also be presumed that the growing influence of Dara Shikoh and Jahan Ara Begum at the court moulded the somewhat harshness of state policies towards the Hindus to a soft end. "There is no denying of the fact, that generally speaking, from the 10<sup>th</sup> year [1638] onwards the policy of Shah Jahan towards the Hindus shows a change for the better, which certainly was due to the growing influence of Dara and Jahanara at court. The three lists of *mansabdars* (two in Abdul Hamid's text and one in Waris), given at the end of each ten yearly cycle of Shah Jahan's reign, furnish a useful study of the increased percentage of *mansabdars* in the Mughal army. During the last ten years of the reign the increase in the higher grades was double, and in lower grades almost threefold."<sup>130</sup>

Thus, it can be seen that Shah Jahan began his reign as an orthodox Muslim ruler but within ten years, the eclectic spirit which is a peculiar trait of the Timurids, began to work through him. "His court still remained a happy meeting-ground of the Hindu and Muslims cultures, and Hindu genius and skill in the field of literature and fine arts were liberally rewarded without

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>129</sup> Zahiruddin Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, Bombay, 1977, p. 384.

<sup>130</sup> K.R. Qanungo, *op. cit.*, pp. 278-79.

discrimination of the creed."<sup>131</sup> Jagannath Mishra, the eminent Sanskrit poet and scholar on whom Shah Jahan bestowed the title of *Panditraj*, hailed him as:

दिल्लीश्वरो वा जगदीश्वरो वा धनेन मां पुरयितुं समर्थः ।

अन्यैः नृपालैः परिदीयमानं शाकं वा स्यात् लवणं वा स्यात् ॥<sup>132</sup>

(Either the king of Delhi or the Lord of the world can satisfy me with money.

Other rulers of men can at best provide vegetables and salt.)

Shah Jahan's relations with the *dargah* of Khwaja Muin ud-Din Chishti at Ajmer should be seen in this scenario. Before his accession to the throne, he "had visited the shrine many times and when he was on his way to the capital from Deccan after Jahangir's death, it was at the *dargah* of Ajmer that Mahabat Khan promised his loyalty and allegiance and support to the future Emperor of Hindustan. After becoming Emperor, he also offered thousands of rupees as *nazar* to the *Khadims* during his regular visits to the *dargah*."<sup>133</sup>

We may conclude that Shah Jahan tried to affect a compromise between the *Shariat* and the practical administration. While officially declaring the state to be an Islamic one, showing respect to the *Shariat*, and observing in his personal life its commands, he adjusted his government according to the needs of the hour, i.e. he didn't reject any of the liberal measures set up by Akbar, e.g. presenting himself on the balcony (*jharokha darshan*), weighing himself for gifts (*tula dan*), the custom of wearing by the nobles a royal miniature portrait of the king on the turban, the ceremony of giving *tika*, i.e. marking the forehead of Hindu rajas when they were invested with titles etc. "Like all compromises, Shah Jahan's compromise was based not on principle but on expediency. As such, it satisfied no party, and the orthodox elements, feeling themselves to be

<sup>131</sup> M.L. Roy Choudhury, *The State and Religion in Mughal India*, Calcutta, c. 1951, p. 218.

<sup>132</sup> Quoted by M.L. Roy Choudhury, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

<sup>133</sup> S.L.H. Moini, *The Chishti Shrine of Ajmer*, pp. 108-9.

stronger than before, continued the demand of a state based on a strict implementation of the *Shariat*.”<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Satish Chandra, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE REIGN OF AURANGZEB: THE PERIOD OF INTERLUDE**

The entire latter-half of the seventeenth century belongs to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb who, despite all controversies about his motivation in his various exertions and being a complex phenomenon, remained the central figure of the state and the society. "For a long time, Aurangzeb has been a kind of bugbear in Indian History with opposite and sharply divided opinions put forward regarding his motivations, the real purpose of his policies, and their impact both on the empire and the larger society. Unlike an earlier ruler, Muhammad bin Tughlaq who, like Aurangzeb, tried to extend the frontiers of his empire to the natural, geographical limits of India, there is near unanimity about the personal character of Aurangzeb—his single-mindedness of purpose, his dedication to his mission as a ruler, his personal valour and skill as a military leader, and his aversion to a life of ostentation, leaning rather to simplicity almost bordering on asceticism."<sup>1</sup>

Aurangzeb had a well-educated personality; he was probably the most accomplished among all the Mughal emperors. Having a mastery over the *Quran* and the *Sunna* (sayings/acts of Prophet Muhammad) as his correspondence aptly proves,<sup>2</sup> he was also a polyglot. He could speak and write Arabic and Persian like a scholar.<sup>3</sup> Hindustani was his mother tongue, the language of Mughal Court in private life.<sup>4</sup> He had some knowledge of Hindi too and could talk and recite popular sayings in that language.<sup>5</sup> He also gained a mastery over Chaghtai Turki while he had served in Balkh and Qandahar.<sup>6</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> Satish Chandra, *Historiography, Religion and State in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 1996, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, vol. I, Calcutta, 1973, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Masir i-Alamgiri*, p. 334, *Alamgirnamah*, p. 1095, quoted by Jadunath Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> *History of Aurangzib*, p. 3.



addition, he could write Arabic in an enthusiastic and masterly *naskh* hand. In this style of writing he used to copy the Quran, an act of piety in the eyes of Muslims. "This puritan Emperor [Aurangzeb], who deemed it sinful to eat the bread of idleness, and [he] used to ply the trade of copyist and cap-maker in his leisure hours in order to earn his livelihood."<sup>7</sup> Saqi Mustad Khan says, "His *nastaliq* and *shikasta* styles of writing were also excellent."<sup>8</sup> This we can believe true because the emperor was the author of a number of letters, and made it a point to write orders across all petitions in his own hand.<sup>9</sup>

But despite these scholarly attributes, Aurangzeb had a unilateral and to say partial approach to some extent towards other aspects belonging to the cultural life. In his letters and discourses, he repeatedly quotes verses to point his remarks but these "familiar quotations" don't prove that he has any special liking for poetry. His historian remarks, "This Emperor did not like to hear useless poetry, still less laudatory verses. But he made an exception in favour of poems containing good counsels."<sup>10</sup> The moral teachings contained in the poetry of Shaikh Sadi and Hafiz of Shiraz he had evidently learnt by rote during his youth, and he quoted them until his end, but he doesn't seem to have studied these poets later in life.<sup>11</sup> Unlike his grandfather he was not having a liking for poetry and unlike his father he had no enthusiasm for history. "His favourite study was theological works—Commentaries on the Quran, the Traditions of Prophet Muhammad, Canon Laws, the works of Imam Muhammad Ghazzali, selections from the letters of Shaikh Sharf Yahia of Munir, and Shaikh Zain ud-Din Qutb Muhi Shirazi, and other works of that class."<sup>12</sup> According to the official history of the first ten years of his reign, he spent his leisure in the afternoon in investigating theological problems,

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by Jadunath Sarkar, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Alamgirnamah, pp. 1092-94, quoted by Jadunath Sarkar, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, p. 532, quoted by Jadunath Sarkar, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Jadunath Sarkar, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, pp. 531-32, quoted by Jadunath Sarkar, op. cit., p. 4.

deliberating on the philosophy of truth (lit. 'the certain sciences'), reading the books and pamphlets of wise men and saints.<sup>13</sup> Like many other devout Muslims, and even some ladies of the Mughal royal family, Aurangzeb memorized the Quran.<sup>14</sup>

Aurangzeb had an aversion to the painting too. This was again unlike his grandfather. In fact "the portraiture of any living being was impossible under an orthodox Islamic king, as an impious imitation of the Creator."<sup>15</sup> He had no taste of music unlike his great grandfather. He banished music from his court in the outburst of his devotion to the duty which marked the completion of the tenth year of his reign.<sup>16</sup> Aurangzeb had none of his father's fervor for construction. No architectural masterpiece, no superb or beautiful mosque, hall, or tomb characterizes his reign. The Pearl Mosque in the Red Fort at Delhi is an exception in this respect. It was begun in 1659 and completed in five years at a cost of one lakh and sixty thousand rupees.<sup>17</sup> The tomb of his wife Dilras Banu (posthumously titled Rabia ud-Daurani) at Aurangabad was his grandest building.<sup>18</sup> "All that he built took the impress of his utilitarian mind. They were commonplace necessary things, piles of brick and mortar, which quickly decayed. Such were the mosques which marked the scenes of his victories, and the numberless *sarais* which he built along the imperial highways running to the south and the west."<sup>19</sup>

Aurangzeb's such an education and ordination and a selective and utilitarian taste inculcated to religious studies naturally resulted in a peculiar temperament and inflexibility in adopting and altering various policies especially his attitude towards Hinduism. With fundamental framework

<sup>13</sup> Alamgirnamah, p. 1103, quoted by Jadunath Sarkar, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, p. 391, quoted by Jadunath Sarkar, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Jadunath Sarkar, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr. Jadunath Sarkar, Calcutta, 1947, p. 45; Anees Jahan Syed, Aurangzeb in Muntakhab ul-Lubab, Bombay, 1977, p. 245.

<sup>17</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> Jadunath Sarkar, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

remained very much the same, this policy underwent through various phases in accordance with the prevailing situation and political demands. "It would be wrong, however, to see Aurangzeb's religious policy in a rigid framework, based on his personal religious beliefs. As a ruler, Aurangzeb had to contend with many political, economic, social and administrative problems. While keen to ensure that the state did not violate the *Shariat*, he could not forget the political reality that any policy which meant the complete alienation of the numerous and powerful Hindu nobles, rajas and *zamindars* would be unworkable."<sup>20</sup>

Aurangzeb was in a dire situation even after his victory in the war of succession and getting the throne. There was a popular repugnance against him as a usurper of the throne who deposited and imprisoned his father, Shah Jahan and killed Dara Shikoh, the heir-apparent and his elder brother, and Murad, his younger brother, "both of whom had the reputation of being liberal patrons of the poor and the needy."<sup>21</sup> It was, thus, necessary for Aurangzeb to represent himself as the upholder of the *Shariat*, and to try and win over the *ulema* to justify his usurpation and to legitimize his sovereignty. Aurangzeb was worried when at the time of his second enthronement in 1659, the chief qazi expressed his inability to crown him since "it was not allowed in the holy religion to recite the *Khutbah* in the name of the son during the life-time of his highly dignified father [Shah Jahan]."<sup>22</sup> Aurangzeb was, however, rescued by Abdul Wahhab Gujarati "the asylum of saintship... who was exalted with the *mansab* of issuing religious decrees"<sup>23</sup> who gave a ruling that since Shah Jahan "has become very weak [and]... has lost his consciousness, [consequently] he has lost control over administrative machinery of the empire." Under such conditions "recitation of the *Khutbah*... in the name of the son who is worthy of *Sultanat* and *Khilafat* [is]

<sup>20</sup> Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire*, New Delhi, 2001, p. 274.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280.

<sup>22</sup> Mirat i-Ahmadi, tr. M.F. Lokhandwala, Baroda, 1965, p. 220.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

permissible and allowable in the holy religion."<sup>24</sup> Aurangzeb rewarded Abdul Wahhab by elevating him to the rank of Qazi ul-Quzat (Chief Qazi).<sup>25</sup> A later authority Khafi Khan, observing the growing intervention of the theologians even in the policy-making says that, "Aurangzeb established the Qazis so firmly in the affairs of state, and with reference to the general principles as well as the details of administration, that the leading and responsible officers of the empire began to regard them with envy and jealousy."<sup>26</sup> The emperor's attempt to please Muslim religious divines for support regarding every political action even incited a protest from some of the nobles as is evident in a letter written to Aurangzeb in the late 1670s by Mahabat Khan II. In it he expressed his surprise at the emperor's policy that had made "fowlers into captives and sparrows into huntsman." He further adds on that "the experienced and able officers of the state are deprived of all trust and confidence while full reliance is placed on hypocritical mystics (*mashaikhana riya kosh*) and empty-headed scholars (*ulemayan i-tahi hosh*)."<sup>27</sup>

In the process of attracting the *ulema*, Aurangzeb laid emphasis on the Islamic character of the empire. This is evident in a number of moral and religious regulations he issued shortly after his accession. Aurangzeb forbade the inscription of *kalma* on coins—since coins could be trampled underfoot or be defiled while passing from hand to hand—he ordered to replace it with some other words.<sup>28</sup> Lunar era was re-instituted "out of regard for the *Shariat*,"<sup>29</sup> and "as the Emperor's (first) victories were gained in the month of Ramzan."<sup>30</sup> But, from the fourth Regnal Year onwards, the celebrations held at the Coronation anniversary had been extended from the 24<sup>th</sup> of Ramzan to the day of Id (1<sup>st</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Anees Jahan Syed, op. cit., p. 248.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted by M. Athar Ali, *Mughal India: Studies in Polity, Ideas, Society, and Culture*, ed., Irfan Habib, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 206-07.

<sup>28</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> Anees Jahan Syed, op. cit., p. 135.

<sup>30</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 14.

Shawwal) because "owing to the fast the people had no liking for entertainment"<sup>31</sup> and it was given a duration of ten days. Aurangzeb discontinued the festival of Nauroz as it was considered a Majusi [Zoroastrian] practice.<sup>32</sup> It was replaced by *nishat-afroz jashan*, an imperial festivity held every year in the month of Ramzan and continued to the Id ul-Fitr (on the 1<sup>st</sup> Shawwal).<sup>33</sup> Mulla Auz Wajih (Iwaz Wajih in the *Mirat i-Ahmadi*) was appointed *Muhtasib* [Censor of Morals].<sup>34</sup> He was ordered to suppress the open display of taverns, gambling dens and idolatry.<sup>35</sup> "Many *mansabdars* and *ahadis* [soldiers] were appointed to help and assist him in this work."<sup>36</sup> Orders were issued to the in-charge of all the provinces to create such posts in their regions.<sup>37</sup> "In appointing *muhtasibs*, Aurangzeb emphasized that the state was also responsible for the moral welfare of the citizens. But the officials were instructed not to interfere in the private lives of citizens."<sup>38</sup>

In the year of 1668, Aurangzeb adopted a number of measures "which have been called puritanical, but many of which were of an economic and social character, or against superstitious beliefs."<sup>39</sup> Just after his accession Aurangzeb adopted a vigorous policy of expansion. It was partly a continuation of the policy of preceding Mughal emperors and partly on Aurangzeb's part to desire success in the military sphere whereby to seek justification for his coup of 1658-59. This policy began in 1659 but for reasons it was followed by a series of rebellions. The Jats rebelled under Gokla in the mid-1660s, the Satnamis revolted in 1672, the Yusufzais rose up near Peshawar in 1667 and in 1672 the Afridis rose. In 1670, Shivaji again opened war against the Mughals and plundered Surat for the second time. With all these setbacks, and a growing

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14; Anees Jahan Syed, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>33</sup> *Masir i-Alamgiri*, tr., p. 14.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*; Anees Jahan Syed, op. cit., p. 136; *Mirat i-Ahmadi*, tr., p. 222.

<sup>35</sup> Anees Jahan Syed, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>36</sup> *Mirat i-Ahmadi*, tr., p. 222.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 275.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

financial crisis reflected in a gap between income and expenditure, Aurangzeb was compelled in consistence with his orthodox temperament which he had been developing, to re-emphasize Islam as a major unifying bond in the highly segmented ruling class by instituting a series of orthodox measures and coming closer to the *ulema*.<sup>40</sup> "Perhaps he hoped that by this means he would be able to rally the Muslims behind him and defeat what he considered to be the main threat—the Marathas and their growing power and alliance with the Muslim rulers of the Deccan."<sup>41</sup>

In 1668, Aurangzeb forbade singing in the court.<sup>42</sup> The official musicians were allowed to "come to the Court, but must not make music"<sup>43</sup> and "their *mansabs* were increased."<sup>44</sup> However, instrumental music and *naubat* (the royal band) were continued.<sup>45</sup> Singing also continued to be patronized by the ladies in the *haram*, and by individual nobles.<sup>46</sup> The semi-official historian of Aurangzeb, Saqi Mustad Khan says that while answering a question from Mirza Mukarram Khan Safavi, who was an expert in the musical art, Aurangzeb said that it (music) was "*mubah*, neither good nor bad." He went on to say, "I cannot listen to the music without flutes (*be-mazamir*) especially *pakhawaj*, but that is unanimously prohibited (*haram*), so I left off singing too."<sup>47</sup> It is quite interesting to note that "the largest numbers of Persian works on classical Indian music were written in Aurangzeb's reign, and that Aurangzeb himself was proficient in playing the *veena*."<sup>48</sup> Aurangzeb's taunt to the protesting musicians that they should bury the bier of music they were carrying deep under the earth "so that

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 301.

<sup>41</sup> Satish Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies, the Rajputs and the Deccan*, New Delhi, 1993; p. 210.

<sup>42</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 45; A.J. Syed, op. cit., p. 245.

<sup>43</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 45.

<sup>44</sup> A.J. Syed, op. cit., p. 245.

<sup>45</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 52.

<sup>46</sup> Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire, p. 275.

<sup>47</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, Bib. Ind., pp. 526-27, quoted by Satish Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies, the Rajputs and the Deccan*, p. 208.

<sup>48</sup> Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire, p. 275.

no echo of it may rise again"<sup>49</sup> was only a statement made into a rage. It may be concluded that Aurangzeb's stance on music and singing was mainly personal and "had little impact on the prevailing cultural ethos."<sup>50</sup> There is also an interesting story related to the unique method of registering protest by the musicians of the shrine of Khwaja Muin ud-Din Chishti. When Aurangzeb first visited the *dargah*, his officials stopped the musicians from playing, so they refused to accept the customary gift. On a succeeding visit, the Emperor prevented his officers from interfering with the playing of music. The musicians performed the music in the memory of Khwaja, hearing that the Emperor was so moved that he paid the musicians double the normal gift.<sup>51</sup>

In the very year, Aurangzeb considering it superstitious and against Islam "as it looked like anthropomorphism"<sup>52</sup> discontinued the practice of *jharoka darshan* or showing himself to the public from the balcony.<sup>53</sup> It adversely affected people of the lowest strata of society who had otherwise no access to the Emperor for redressing of their grievances. Similarly in 1668, Aurangzeb stopped the ceremony of weighting the emperor against gold and silver and other articles on his birthdays.<sup>54</sup> It seems that this practice "started during Akbar's reign had become widespread and was a burden on the smaller nobles."<sup>55</sup> But the weight of social opinion was more than that of emperor's resolve. "Aurangzeb had to permit this ceremony for his sons when they recovered from illness."<sup>56</sup> He forbade astrologers to prepare almanacs<sup>57</sup> "as it

<sup>49</sup> Muntakhab ul-Lubab, Urdu tr., Mahmud Ahmad Faruqi, vol. III, Karachi, 1963, p. 196.

<sup>50</sup> Mughal Religious Policies, the Rajputs and the Deccan, p. 208.

<sup>51</sup> W. Frazer, History of Aurangzeb, MS Bodleian, 262, ff. 11b-12a, quoted by S.A.A. Rizvi, A History of Sufism in India, vol. I, New Delhi, 2003, p. 127. "The Mughal Emperor [Aurangzeb] during his stay at Ajmer between 1679-81, while suppressing the Rathor rebellion, regularly offered *fatiha*, *attar* (perfume) and *nazar* (offering) at the shrine." S.L.H. Moini, The Chishti Shrine of Ajmer: Pirs, Pilgrims, Practices, Jaipur, 2004, p. 167.

<sup>52</sup> M.L. Roy Choudhury, The State and Religion in Mughal India, Calcutta, c. 1951, p. 228.

<sup>53</sup> A.J. Syed, op. cit., p. 246.

<sup>54</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 48.

<sup>55</sup> Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire, p. 276.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> A.J. Syed, op. cit., p. 247.

looked like star-worship.”<sup>58</sup> His order was, however, “flouted by everybody, including the members of the royal family.”<sup>59</sup> It is interesting to note that during his first coronation on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1658, Aurangzeb acceded to the throne at an auspicious moment fixed by the astrologers.<sup>60</sup>

Various other regulations of an analogous kind were issued, “some of a moral character and some to instill a sense of austerity, and some to ban practices considered against the Islamic spirit.”<sup>61</sup> He prohibited “as his predecessors did”<sup>62</sup> the castration of children to be sold as eunuchs.<sup>63</sup> Aurangzeb stopped the practice of the emperor putting a *tika* (saffron paste) on the forehead of a new raja at the time of investiture “as he considered it an idolatrous custom”<sup>64</sup> and “salutation (*taslim*) alone being declared to be enough.”<sup>65</sup> It was, however, a later development of 1679. In 1669, He ordered that “the gold embroideries from the royal robes and *Khilats*”<sup>66</sup> to be taken out “as the wearing of it was opposed to the Holy Law.”<sup>67</sup> As a measure of economy even the official department of history-writing was discontinued.<sup>68</sup> “Although displaying a puritanical frame of mind, these measures were prompted, in part, by a financial crisis which Aurangzeb faced around this time.”<sup>69</sup> There was meager rainfall and crop-failure in one province after another for a succession of years after 1660.<sup>70</sup> Aurangzeb abolished, after his accession, *rahdari* (road toll) on the transit of grains and other articles<sup>71</sup> and various other taxes “whether

<sup>58</sup> M.L. Roy Choudhury, op. cit., p. 228.

<sup>59</sup> Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire, p. 276.

<sup>60</sup> Mirat i-Ahmadi, tr., p. 212.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> M.L. Roy Choudhury, op. cit., p. 228.

<sup>63</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 48.

<sup>64</sup> M.L. Roy Choudhury, op. cit., p. 229.

<sup>65</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 109.

<sup>66</sup> M.L. Roy Choudhury, op. cit., p. 229.

<sup>67</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 50.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>69</sup> Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire, p. 276.

<sup>70</sup> It is evident in the high price of the grain. To get the price down, Aurangzeb abolished *rahdari* and tax of one-tenth of the produce from the crown land.

<sup>71</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 16.



permitted by the *Shariat* or not."<sup>72</sup> Aurangzeb also remitted the *sharai* tax of one-tenth of the produce from the *khalisa* in order to reduce the high price of grain.<sup>73</sup> We don't know how honestly these prohibitions were implemented, but we are told that in the *khalisa* (crown-land) alone, *rahdari* had yielded 25 lakhs of rupees a year.<sup>74</sup>

It looks as if Aurangzeb was "keen to promote trade among the Muslims who depended almost exclusively on state support."<sup>75</sup> In 1665, he ordered to impose an octroi at the rates of 2.5% on the goods of merchandise of the Muslim traders and 5% on the goods of Hindu traders.<sup>76</sup> Two years afterward he abolished this tax levied on Muslim traders.<sup>77</sup> But he had to re-impose it when he found that Muslim traders were misusing it by presenting the merchandise of Hindu traders as theirs!<sup>78</sup> However, it was kept low at 2.5% in comparison to that imposed on the Hindus which remained 5%.<sup>79</sup>

In 1675-76 orders were issued to the central revenue-officers that *karoris* of all the crown-lands should be Muslims and the *subedars* and *talugdars* were asked to dismiss their Hindu *peshkars* and revenue-officers and to appoint Muslims in their place.<sup>80</sup> Such an order which seems to be motivated by a sense of idealism was by no means feasible. There was always a dearth of competent Muslims in the lower levels of administration especially in the area of revenue administration, in a country predominantly inhabited by Hindus. And, so, it is doubtful that the order would be implemented in reality.

Despite the facts known by *Masir i-Alamgiri*, that in the thirteenth Regnal year, it was reported that expenditure had exceeded income during the

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<sup>72</sup> A.J. Syed, op. cit., p. 141.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 16.

<sup>75</sup> Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire, p. 276.

<sup>76</sup> Mirat i-Ahmadi, tr., p. 230.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 237.

<sup>78</sup> A.J. Syed, op. cit., p. 258.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

preceding twelve years<sup>81</sup> and some of Aurangzeb's measures of economy were "[the retrenchment of] many items of the expenditure of the Emperor, the Princes and the Begums"<sup>82</sup> these steps if they were even the least attempts to overcome the economic crisis, showed a narrow and limited outlook on Aurangzeb's part, particularly on social and economic issues since economic activities are of secular nature in themselves.

Some of Aurangzeb's other measures may be called discriminatory in nature and show a sense of bigotry towards people professing other religions especially Hinduism. There are two distinctive parameters on which Aurangzeb's attitude towards Hinduism can be discerned, namely his approach for Hindu temples and his re-imposing the *Jizyah* in 1679.

Soon after ascending the throne, Aurangzeb restated the position of the *Shariat* about temples, churches, synagogues, etc. when he issued the following order on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1659 with regard to a dispute over the holding right of the ancient temples of Banaras. It runs as, "It has been decided according to our Canon Law that long standing temples should not be demolished but no new temples be allowed to be built."<sup>83</sup> Further, old places of worship could be repaired "since buildings cannot last forever."

Aurangzeb's stance on temples was by no means a novel one. It reaffirmed the position which prevailed during the entire period of the Sultanate of Delhi and which had been repeated by Shah Jahan early in his reign. In theory, it seems to be a policy of limited toleration extended to the temples; but in practice individual opinion and sentiment of the ruler in the matter weighted a lot with the officials who were free to take great liberty in the interpretation of the words "long standing". For example, after the rise of broad-minded Dara Shikoh as Shah Jahan's favourite, a small number of temples had been demolished in pursuance of his order regarding new

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<sup>81</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 62.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1911, p. 689.

temples.<sup>84</sup> In 1644 Aurangzeb, as governor of Gujarat, ordered the Temple of Chintaman built by Shantidas jeweller to be destroyed and a masjid named "Quwwat ul-Islam" was erected on its remains.<sup>85</sup> However, on a complaint from Shantidas, and a ruling from the famous scholar Mulla Abdul Hakim that the mosque had no sanctity since Aurangzeb had violated *Shariat* by usurping the property of Shantidas, Shah Jahan ordered the temple restored to its owner.<sup>86</sup> Aurangzeb must have destroyed other temples of Gujarat during his governorship since in a *farman* of 1665 he forbade the residents of the city of Ahmadabad and its dependencies including towns and parganas of the said province to do adoration, who have rebuilt the temples demolished before his accession, installed idols in them and resumed worshiping them since it was an "irreligious deed."<sup>87</sup> He ordered the officials to pull down these temples with an immediate effect.<sup>88</sup> It seems that the famous temple of Somnath was among such temples.<sup>89</sup>

Aurangzeb's order regarding ban on new temples didn't lead to a *general destruction* of temples since no *farman* of such kind is found yet, and has been referred to by no contemporary observer except Saqi Mustad Khan who wrote his history half a dozen years after Aurangzeb's death. He asserts that the motive of Aurangzeb in doing so was to "establish Islam" and that in the eleventh year of his reign, in 1669, the Emperor ordered the governors of all the provinces to destroy the temples and to stop public practice of the religion of these misbelievers, i.e. the Hindus.<sup>90</sup> We shall see further that this passage is quite misunderstood.

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<sup>84</sup> Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire, p. 278.

<sup>85</sup> Mirat i-Ahmadi, tr., p. 194.

<sup>86</sup> Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire, p. 255.

<sup>87</sup> Mirat i-Ahmadi, tr., p. 231.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Mirat i-Ahmadi, *Supplement*, tr. Syed Nawab Ali & C.N. Seddon, Baroda, 1928, p. 120.

<sup>90</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., pp. 51-52.

In a recent piece of writing, it is shown that from about sixth century onwards, attacks on images and temples patronized by enemy kings had been completely integrated into Indian political behavior and that the temples had been the natural sites for the contestation of kingly authority well before the arrival of Muslim Turks to India.<sup>91</sup> Not surprising, during the whole period of the Sultanate of Delhi, this established pattern towards the temples was followed and continued by the Turkish rulers.<sup>92</sup> As a means of state-building and legitimizing one's claims over the newly-conquered areas, it was necessary to get rid of all previous political authority over that territory. When such authority was vested in a ruler whose own legality was linked with a royal temple—characteristically one that housed an image of a ruling dynasty's *rashtra devta* (state-deity, mostly Vishnu or Shiva)—that temple was normally looted, restructured, or destroyed, any of which had the effect of separating a conquered raja from the most well-known expression of his former legitimacy.<sup>93</sup> "With their lushly sculpted imagery vividly displaying the mutual interdependence of kings and gods and the commingling of divine and human kingship, royal temple complexes of the early medieval period were thoroughly and pre-eminently political institutions... the central icon housed in a royal temple's 'womb-chamber' and inhabited by the state-deity of the temple's royal patron, expressed the shared sovereignty of king and deity."<sup>94</sup> Although temple priests attributed to a royal temple's deity having transcendental and universal power, it was also believed that the same deity had a very special relationship, in fact a sovereign relationship, with the specific geographical site in which its temple complex was located.<sup>95</sup> This insistence on localism was a characteristic feature of the Indian Feudalism, the period between sixth to twelfth centuries

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<sup>91</sup> Richard M. Eaton, 'Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States', in *Essays on Islam and Indian History*, New Delhi, 2006. See *idem*, pp. 106-107 for instances related to the period preceding the Turkish invasions.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109, 112-113.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

A.D. being its classical phase. Thus, the temples being “politically active, inasmuch as the state-deities they housed were understood as expressing the shared sovereignty of king and deity over a particular dynastic realm”<sup>96</sup> were politically vulnerable from about the sixth century on:

This prevailing situation changed with the advent of the Mughals. The stray references of post-victory temple-protection and even patronage became a regular policy of such kind starting with Akbar. From Akbar’s period, Mughal emperors “treated temples lying within their sovereign domain as state property; accordingly, they undertook to protect both the physical structures and their Brahman functionaries.”<sup>97</sup> In the previous chapters we have seen endowment of land-grants to the temples at Mathura and Vrindavan as well as its priests by the Mughal emperors. Simultaneously, in serving imperial ends by financing Hindu religious institutions, the Mughals became intensely occupied in institutionalized Indian religions. We find Akbar allowing high-ranking Rajput officials serving him to build their own monumental temples in the provinces to which they were posted.<sup>98</sup> His successors went still further. Shah Jahan’s officials posted in Orissa, by sitting on a canopied chariot while accompanying Lord Jagannath’s annual car festival, ritually demonstrated that it was the Mughal emperor, functioning through his appointed officers (*mansabdar*), who was the temple’s—and for this reason the god’s—supreme lord and guardian.<sup>99</sup> Such actions projected a hierarchy of religio-political power moving down from the Mughal emperor to his *mansabdar*, from the *mansabdar* to Lord Jagannath including his temple, from Jagannath to the local king who was the patron of the god, and from the king to his subjects. Thus, contrary to the preceding period, for the Mughals, “politics within their sovereign domains

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., pp. 123-24

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>98</sup> Catherine B. Asher, ‘The Architecture of Raja Man Singh: A Study of Sub-Imperial Patronage’, in Barbara Stoler Miller, ed., *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture*, Delhi, 1992, pp. 183-201.

<sup>99</sup> P. Acharya, ‘Burton’s Account of Cuttack and Puri’, *Orissa Historical Research Journal* 10, no. 3, 1961, p. 46.

never meant annihilating prior authority, but appropriating it within a hierarchy of power that flowed from the Peacock Throne to the mass of commoners below."<sup>100</sup>

Such ideals continued in effect even in the reign of Aurangzeb, who in an aforementioned *farman* of 1659 to the local officials of Banaras, clearly indicated that the Brahman temple functionaries there, together with the temples of which they were in-charge, deserved state protection.<sup>101</sup> In defence of this order, the emperor noted that, "According to the Holy Law (*Shariat*) and the exalted creed, it has been established that ancient temples should not be torn down."<sup>102</sup> On this point, Aurangzeb sided himself with the theory and practice of the Indo-Muslim example of state-building. But, after that he added, "nor should new temples be built"<sup>103</sup>—a view by expressing which Aurangzeb receded decisively from Akbar's policy of allowing his Rajput officers to build the temple complexes on their behalf in the Mughal territory. It seems that this order applied only to Banaras for many new temples were built during Aurangzeb's reign elsewhere in India especially in Bengal<sup>104</sup> one might wonder what incited the emperor's concern in this matter.

It has been suggested by R.M. Eaton, as we have previously seen, the temples having a "latent political significance" can be used "as a power-base to further its [Hindu] patron's political aspirations."<sup>105</sup> In an Indo-Muslim state if a subordinate non-Muslim chieftain, who had been successfully incorporated into the state's aristocracy, showed signs of unfaithfulness—and especially if he engaged in an open rebellion—the state as a punitive measure thought it justified to desecrate the temple considered "as an extension of the

<sup>100</sup> R.M. Eaton, op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>101</sup> Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1911, pp. 689-90.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.; Eaton's translation in op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> R.M. Eaton, The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier (1204-1760), New Delhi, 1994, pp. 184-85, 263.

<sup>105</sup> R.M. Eaton, Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States, p. 118.

[disloyal/rebel] officer."<sup>106</sup> This move of temple-desecration as a means of state maintenance was by no means a novel one on Aurangzeb's part. In 1478, when a Bahmani garrison on the Andhra coast mutinied, murdered its governor, and entrusted the fort to Bhimraj Oriyya, who until then had been a Bahmani client, the sultan Mohammad Bahmani II personally marched to the site and after a six-month siege, stormed the fort, destroyed its temple, and built a mosque on the site.<sup>107</sup> We have seen earlier that in 1613 while at Pushkar, near Ajmer, Jahangir ordered to break an image of *varah* (boar) that had been housed in a temple belonging to Rana Shankar, an uncle of Rana Amar of Mewar, the emperor's arch enemy.<sup>108</sup> Shah Jahan, in 1635, during the Bundela uprising caused by Raja Jajhar Singh, a high-ranking *mansabdar*, ordered the great temple at Orchha to be destroyed.<sup>109</sup> In 1669, there arose an insurgence in Banaras among landholders, some of whom were alleged of having helped Shivaji flight from imperial detention.<sup>110</sup> Shivaji's escape, it was also believed, had been primarily assisted by Jai Singh, the great grandson of Raja Man Singh, who almost certainly constructed Banaras's great Vishvanath temple.<sup>111</sup> It was against this background that Aurangzeb ordered the demolition of that temple in 1669.<sup>112</sup> Shortly before this incident, the Jats of the Mathura region rose in rebellion under the leadership of Gokla, a small *zamindar* and they offered a stiff resistance to the Mughal Empire. In early 1670, soon after the capture of Gokla, Aurangzeb, as an appalling action, issued orders for the demolition of Keshava Dev Temple at Mathura,<sup>113</sup> built during the reign of Jahangir by his confidant

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. Cf. "In case of conflict with local elements, he [Aurangzeb] now considered it legitimate to destroy even long-standing Hindu temples as a measure of punishment and as a warning." Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire*, p. 278.

<sup>107</sup> Muhammad Qasim Firishta, *Tarikh i-Firishta*, tr. J. Briggs, *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1981, p. 306.

<sup>108</sup> *The Tuzuk i-Jahangiri*, tr. Rogers and Beveridge, Vol. I, Delhi, 2006, p. 254.

<sup>109</sup> *The Shah Jahan Nama of Inayat Khan*, tr. A.R. Fuller, New Delhi, 1990, p. 161.

<sup>110</sup> R.M. Eaton, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> *Masir i-Alamgiri*, tr., p. 55.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

Bir Singh Deo Bundela as a 'reward' for slaying Abul Fazl.<sup>114</sup> Mustad Khan, author of the *Masir i-Alamgiri*, denoting political motive of Aurangzeb in temple-destruction in general and with special reference to the demolition of the temple of Keshava Dev says, "On seeing this instance of the strength of the Emperor's faith and the grandeur of his devotion to God, the proud Rajas were stiffed, and in amazement they stood like images facing the wall."<sup>115</sup> During the Rathor rebellion<sup>116</sup> of 1679-80 and its backing by the Rana Raj Singh of Mewar, many temples were destroyed at Jodhpur<sup>117</sup> and at Udaipur<sup>118</sup> and Chittor.<sup>119</sup> Aurangzeb began to look upon temples, for reasons unknown perhaps due to his suspicious nature and conformist approach, as "centres of spreading subversive ideas, that is, ideas which were not acceptable to the orthodox elements."<sup>120</sup> Thus, he took stern action when he came to know, in 1669, that in some of the temples at Thatta, Multan and especially at Banaras, Hindus and Muslims both used to come from great distances to learn from the Brahmans. Aurangzeb issued orders to the governors of all the provinces to put down such practices and to demolish the temples where such practices took place.<sup>121</sup> Considerable misunderstanding has arisen from this passage as it sounds that the emperor issued an order of large-scale destruction of temples in the eleventh year of his reign. R.M. Eaton<sup>122</sup> has raised questions that it's not clear what sort of teaching or 'false books' (*kutub i-batila*) were involved in these 'established schools' (*madaris i-muqarrar*), or why both Hindu and Muslim 'admirers and students' were attracted to them? The imperial court, it is

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> For its causes in the light of newly-discovered contemporary source-materials see M. Athar Ali, 'Causes of the Rathor Rebellion of 1679' in *Mughal India: Studies in Politics, Ideas, Society, and Culture*, ed., Irfan Habib, New Delhi, 2007 and Satish Chandra, 'Hukumat-ri-Bahi and the Rathor War' in *Mughal Religious Policies, the Rajputs and the Deccan*, New Delhi, 1993.

<sup>117</sup> *Masir i-Alamgiri*, tr., p. 108.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., pp. 114-15, 116-17.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>120</sup> *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire*, p. 278.

<sup>121</sup> *Masir i-Alamgiri*, tr., pp. 51-52.

<sup>122</sup> *Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States*, p. 121.



evident, was first and foremost concerned with restricting the influence of a certain 'mode' or 'manner' of teaching (*taur i-dars-o-tadris*) within the empire. In fact, "far from being... a general order for the destruction of all temples in the empire," this edict was "responding to specific reports of an educational nature and was targeted at investigating those institutions where a certain kind of teaching had been taking place."<sup>123</sup> The decree did not say that schools and places of worship be demolished, but rather than they be *subject* to demolition,<sup>124</sup> indicating that local officials were required to make inquiry before taking any action. Or, as has been suggested by Satish Chandra<sup>125</sup> that by issuing an order of destructing *all* the temples within the imperial domain, Aurangzeb was going *beyond* the position of *Shariat*, because the *Shariat* doesn't restrain the non-Muslims from professing their faiths as long as they followed certain conditions, e.g. loyalty to the ruler etc. And, Hindus, in general, didn't show any sign of disloyalty to the Mughal Empire which prompted Aurangzeb to issue such type of directive.

Amidst these instances of temple-desecration, we do have cases of grants to Hindu temples and *mathas* by Aurangzeb. He gave grants of seven villages to Ram Rai, eldest son of Guru Har Rai, to establish his own centre at Dehra Dun.<sup>126</sup> Aurangzeb was at very cordial relations with Mahant Anand Nath, head of the Shaiva establishment at Jakhbar [presently in the Gurdaspur district of the Punjab]. In a *farman* of 1661-62, which appears to be a personal letter written by Aurangzeb in the early part of his reign, the said Mahant is addressed in a most reverential tone and contains the Emperor's request for some well-treated mercury. The document also suggests that the Emperor had

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1871, p. 81; see Eaton's translation in op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>125</sup> Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire, p. 279.

<sup>126</sup> A.C. Banerjee, 'Aurangzeb and the Sikh Gurus', in Harbans Singh and N. Gerald Barrier, eds., *Punjab Past and Present: Essays in Honour of Dr. Ganda Singh*, Patiala, 1976, p. 129.

become acquainted with the Jogi through a prior meeting.<sup>127</sup> Aurangzeb's thoughtfulness for Anand Nath in the early 1660s is evident in another document.<sup>128</sup> In the village Thar, Anand Nath was possessing fifteen *ghumaos* of land through *madad i-maash* and the emperor increased that grant to twenty *ghumaos*. Aurangzeb is known to have passed a general order in 1672-73 that the *madad i-maash* grants given earlier to the non-Muslims should be resumed; as it would be obvious from a later document coming from Bahadur Shah's reign (1710),<sup>129</sup> the *madad i-maash* land of the Jogis of Narot was resumed towards the close of the fifteenth year of Aurangzeb's reign.<sup>130</sup> Aurangzeb also gave grants to the temples at Vrindavan and their Priests,<sup>131</sup> but in most cases it was only reaffirmation of the previous grants and it's difficult to deny the suggestion proposed by Prof. Satish Chandra that the trend during this period was "to limit revenue-free grants given to non-Muslims."<sup>132</sup>

The arguments put forward above were not intended to exonerate Aurangzeb of the charges of destroying the centres of faith of a particular community, but to advise humbly try to see things in a proper perspective. Aurangzeb was not a valet of religion, he was an emperor and his paramount concern was to protect his kingdom; so most of his actions must be seen to be motivated by political sense – it was the unlucky religion which was accursed to be used as armor or veil to justify one's political misdeeds! It happened prior to Aurangzeb and it was not that it didn't occur in the future.

Due to various reasons, discussed above, it was Aurangzeb's compulsion to get the support of the *ulema* and to keep them with him at any cost. Through a number of regulations being moral and religious in nature issued just after his

<sup>127</sup> B.N. Goswamy and J.S. Grewal, *The Mughals and the Jogis of Jakhbar: Some Madad-i-Maash and Other Documents*, Simla, 1967, pp. 32-33 (Document No. VIII). See *idem*, pp. 119-124 for facsimile, transcription, translation and annotation of the Document.

<sup>128</sup> Not being published but only referred to, *idem*, p. 33.

<sup>129</sup> Document No. XII, *idem*.

<sup>130</sup> For facsimile, transcription, translation and annotation of the Document, see *idem*, pp. 151-56.

<sup>131</sup> R. A. Alavi, 'The Temples of Vrindavan and their Priests during the reign of Aurangzeb', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 49<sup>th</sup> Session, Dharwad, 1988.

<sup>132</sup> *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire*, p. 279.

accession, he emphasized the Islamic nature of the empire. Thus, by appointing censors and prohibiting the Hindu pilgrims to assemble<sup>133</sup> (by reviving the pilgrim taxes) he "gladdened the hearts of the orthodox *ulema*."<sup>134</sup> Again in 1668-69, he re-emphasized Islam as a major unifying bond in the highly segmented nobility by instituting a series of orthodox measures and coming closer to the *ulema*, which we have seen. All these crisis-driven measures, only partially fulfilling his objectives, were again became evident in the re-imposition of *Jizyah* in 1679 by Aurangzeb which can be said to be the apex of the discriminatory policy against non-Muslims which he adopted just following his accession. It's being untimely and mistimed reveals, again, the political motive and not the religious exigency behind its re-imposing; because if Aurangzeb was genuinely committed to provide the state an Islamic character, *Jizyah* must be levied right from the beginning of his reign and not after a delay of 22 years since it was *wajib* (compulsory) according to the *Shariat*. Why Aurangzeb, himself fully conversant with the canonical laws, waited for 22 years to arrive at the orthodox position regarding *Jizyah*, which was amply clear and which had been repeatedly expounded by the orthodox *ulema*? In this regard, it would be interesting to see the explanations put forward by a number of contemporary and near contemporary observers for the re-imposition of *Jizyah* by Aurangzeb. Saqi Mustad Khan, who wrote on the basis of official papers and may almost be regarded as the official historian of Aurangzeb's reign, says, "As all the aims of the religious Emperor were directed to the spreading of the law of Islam and the overthrow of the practices of the infidels, he issued orders to the high *diwani* officers that from Wednesday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1679, in obedience to the Quranic injunction 'till they pay commutation money (*Jizyah*) with the hand in humility'<sup>135</sup> and in agreement with the canonical

<sup>133</sup> A.J. Syed, op. cit., p. 245.

<sup>134</sup> Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals- Mughal Empire, p. 280.

<sup>135</sup> *Quran*: (IX, 29). The translation of this whole verse by Abdullah Yusuf Ali is as follows: Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah

traditions, *Jizyah* should be collected from the infidels (*zimmis*) of the capital and the provinces."<sup>136</sup>

Khafi Khan, emphasizing the role of the emperor in this matter similar to Saqi Mustad Khan, says, "The world-subduing imperial order was issued that in order to reduce the infidels to subjection, and to distinguish (India) as a land obedient to Islam (*Muti ul-Islam*) from the lands of infidelity (*Dar ul-harb*), the *Jizyah* was to be exacted from the Hindus and it was to be levied in all provinces."<sup>137</sup>

Ishwardas Nagar and Ali Muhammad Khan are in broad agreement with Saqi Mustad Khan, but accentuate the role of the *ulema* in the matter. Ishwardas says, "The theologians, the jurists and the learned bearing in mind the religious feelings of the Emperor made a submission that according to the *Shariat*, the *Jizyah* should be collected from infidels (*zimmis*)."<sup>138</sup> Ali Muhammad Khan says, "As all the energy of His Majesty [Aurangzeb] was directed to strengthening the clear religion and giving currency to the usages of the strong Path, he moulded all state affairs and financial and revenue matters in the religious cast. Learned men, scholars and theologians saw that His Majesty encouraged religion during his auspicious regime, they represented to him the levy of *Jizyah* on *zimmis* of the Empire necessary and incumbent in accordance with the path of bright religion and way of shining creed. They wrote out the quantity (of amount) and mode of its collection from theological books and placed them before His Majesty."<sup>139</sup>

These statements, which run on almost parallel lines, can be placed demonstrating the official standpoint. They naturally emphasize the emperor's regard for the true faith and his respect to the suggestions of the theologians,

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and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, from among the People of the Book, until they pay the *Jizyah* with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.

<sup>136</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 108.

<sup>137</sup> A.J. Syed, op. cit., p. 275.

<sup>138</sup> Futuhat i-Alamgiri, tr. Tasneem Ahmad, Delhi, 1978, p. 117.

<sup>139</sup> Mirat i-Ahmadi, tr., p. 264.

learned men, etc. as the reason for the re-imposition of *Jizyah*, but none of them explain the reasons of time interval of 22 years which elapsed between Aurangzeb's accession and the reinstitution of *Jizya* by him. The answer would be evident in analyzing the changing contours of the Mughal state.

We have seen in the preceding pages that Akbar tried to evolve the Mughal state at first, as a multi-religious and later, as a supra-religious entity. The ideological foundation of such type of state was *Sulh i-Kul* [Universal Peace or more precisely, Universal Toleration (of all the religions)]. If the state was a supra-religious entity, either it should discard all the religions altogether or it should extend patronage to every religion. Since rejection of every religion is a part of the process of secularization, a yet to be achieved goal in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, what about to say of the 16<sup>th</sup> century! So the sole alternate available to the Mughal state as a supra-religious state was the patronage of every religion indiscriminately. In such a state, distinction among people on the basis of their religion was undesirable. This provided a logical basis for Akbar to abolish the *Jizyah* early in his reign in 1564. The basic arguments advanced by Abul Fazl in justification of the abolition of *Jizyah* were political and ideological, though the economic aspect was not overlooked. According to him, *Jizyah* was imposed formerly by those "who held outward sway" because they "on account of heart-rooted enmity, were girded up for the contempt and destruction of opposite factions." Enumerating its political and monetary gains, Abul Fazl subsequently says, "For political purposes, and for their own advantage, they fixed a sum of money as a compensation thereof, and gave it the name of *Jizyah*. Thus, *they both gained their object and also derived a profit.*" Emphasizing the futility of *Jizyah* in the present scenario, Abul Fazl says that "owing to the blessing of the abundant good-will and graciousness of the lord of the age [Akbar]" people professing other religions [especially the Hindus] like "those of one mind and one religion [the Muslims]" have "girded the loins of devotion and service [and] they exert themselves for the advancement of the [Mughal] dominion." Here arguing that

the Hindus were as loyal to the state as the Muslims, and they were also rendering the military services to the state, Abul Fazl sought to remove the chief prop of the theological argument in favour of *Jizyah*. Moreover, he argues that in earlier times *Jizyah* was levied because of the "neediness of the rulers and their assistants" but thanks to his abundant treasures and affluence of his associates, the Emperor had no need of it at that time. Abul Fazl concludes that while the benefits of *Jizyah* were "imaginary", its continuation tended to the "path of definite dissension"<sup>140</sup> and was, as a result, politically inexpedient and also against natural justice. In this way, Akbar's concept of the state was noticeably modern and secular and it cut the root of priestly privileges. Naturally, it was unacceptable to the orthodox opinion.

For the succeeding Mughal emperors the primary political problem was "to allay the opposition of the orthodox elements without... abandoning Akbar's basic policy of allaying with the Rajputs and other elements of the indigenous ruling class."<sup>141</sup> Consecutively, this assumed a policy of broad religious toleration by the subsequent Mughal emperors. Jahangir kept himself away from giving open offence to the orthodox elements, but on the whole effected little change in the nature of the state as was instituted by Akbar. Shah Jahan tried to declare the fundamentally Islamic character of the state by formally proclaiming himself a defender of the faith, ordering the destruction of newly constructed temples, and putting down heretical practices, e.g. mixed marriages of Hindus and Muslims in Bhimbar (Kashmir) and the Punjab, as we have seen. Concurrently, he firmly denied the *ulema* to be involved in determining state policies, and extended state patronage and support to all sections of the *ulema*, including the *wujudis* as well as the *shuhudis*.<sup>142</sup> Shah Jahan's concept of the state was, thus, retrogression from the concept of Akbar

<sup>140</sup> For the aforementioned quotations see Akbarnama, tr. H. Beveridge, II, pp. 316-17.

<sup>141</sup> Satish Chandra, 'Jizyah and the State in India during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century', in *Mughal Religious Policies, the Rajputs and the Deccan*, New Delhi, 1993, p. 178.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

as expounded by Abul Fazl in the *Ain i-Akbari*. It was based on a compromise between the *Shariat* and the practical administration. But, taking into account the well-established power of Muslim orthodoxy, it was perhaps the only compromise possible in seventeenth century India.<sup>143</sup> It was based, like all compromises, on no clear principle but on political expediency and so was unstable. Once the fundamentally Islamic character of the state was given even in theory, the arguments for establishing it on *Shariat* became overpoweringly.

Aurangzeb's success in the war of succession and his accession to the throne raised the expectations of the *ulema* but it would be wrong to say that his accession "heralded the triumph of Muslim theologians."<sup>144</sup> Following his accession, Aurangzeb "went out of his way to conciliate and win over the leading Rajput rajas."<sup>145</sup> The chiefs of the three foremost Rajput states, Mewar (Rana Raj Singh Sisodia), Marwar (Maharaja Jaswant Singh) and Amber (Mirza Raja Jai Singh), had cordial relations with Aurangzeb. He granted the latter two a higher position in the imperial echelon and in the stately affairs "than had been accorded to any Hindu since the days of Raja Man Singh"<sup>146</sup> thus, firmly maintaining the policy of allaying with the Rajputs and other elements of indigenous ruling class. The *ulema* were not allowed a share in determining state policies and it seems that Aurangzeb was not prepared to go beyond the framework of Shah Jahan's policies. Thus, he refrained from reviving *Jizyah* at the beginning of his reign, though its *de rigueur* nature was beyond question according to the orthodox opinion.

A contemporary author has told us that although the question of the revival of *Jizyah* engaged the Emperor's attention at the beginning of his reign,

<sup>143</sup> See S.A.A. Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Agra, 1965, pp. 407-09.

<sup>144</sup> S.R. Sharma, *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*, New Delhi, 1988, p. 107.

<sup>145</sup> Satish Chandra, 'Mughal-Rajput Relations during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century - Problems of a Class Alliance', in *Mughal Religious Policies, the Rajputs and the Deccan*, p. 83.

<sup>146</sup> Satish Chandra, *Jizyah and the State in India during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century*, p. 179.

he "postponed the matter due to certain political exigencies."<sup>147</sup> It has not been told, however, what these political exigencies were, but we can safely presume that the need of not going beyond the framework of Shah Jahan's policies and of maintaining the alliance with the Rajputs were a few of them. Aurangzeb may also have expected to reach some agreement with the Marathas. These expectations, however grew fainter, chiefly "after the failure of Bahadur Khan's negotiations with Shivaji in 1676, Shivaji's attempt to carve out a Maratha dominion in the south in alliance with Golconda, and his virtual assumption of the mantle of being the defender of the Deccani states against the Mughals."<sup>148</sup> Thus, to manage the danger of the imminent dissolution of the Deccani states to the Marathas, Aurangzeb decided a policy of maximum expansion of the Mughal Empire towards the Deccan, thus, giving up "the policy of limited encroachments which the Mughals had pursued since the days of Akbar, and which had been the policy of Shah Jahan in his settlement of 1636, and Aurangzeb's own policy since his accession."<sup>149</sup> For the Mughals, the purpose of adopting such an expansionist policy was "to establish for themselves a position in Bijapur and Golconda which would enable them to detach these states from their alliance with the Marathas, safeguard against the danger of their passing under Maratha domination, and enable the Mughals to utilize the resources and territories of these countries against the Marathas."<sup>150</sup> However, successive invasions to conquer Bijapur and Golconda failed and by 1678 the Mughals were unsuccessful to attain even one of these objectives. It seems that under these circumstances, Aurangzeb considered the requirement "to make some striking declaration, which might rouse enthusiasm and rally Muslim opinion behind him."<sup>151</sup> For the fundamentally conformist mind of Aurangzeb,

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<sup>147</sup> *Khulasat us-Siyah*, Aligarh MS, f. 38b, quoted by Satish Chandra, *Jizyah and the State in India during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century*, p. 180.

<sup>148</sup> Satish Chandra, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*



nothing could be more fascinating than the marking of the new phase in the expansion of the empire by reinstituting *Jizyah*, “signifying the reversion to a more orthodox type of state”<sup>152</sup> though it didn’t imply abandonment of Akbar’s policy of allying with the Rajputs and other elements in the indigenous ruling class. It is evident by the fact that the number of Hindus in various strata of nobility didn’t decline but actually increased after 1679.<sup>153</sup> The re-imposition of *Jizyah*, thus, can scarcely be taken to mark the beginning of a more bitterly anti-Hindu policy, as had sometimes been debated.

By reviving *Jizyah*, Aurangzeb tried to avert a deepening political crisis in the Deccan, he also through its re-imposition offered a huge inducement to the orthodox religious elements, among whom a large-scale unemployment was prevailed, by “earmarking the proceeds of *Jizyah* for distribution in charity among the learned, the *faqirs*, the theologians etc., and further, by providing that the new department of *Jizyah*, with its own treasury [*Khazanah i-Jizyah*]<sup>154</sup> and set of *amins* [collectors], should be staffed predominantly by these sections [orthodox religious elements].”<sup>155</sup> Aurangzeb hoped that through winning over the clergy to his side by providing them jobs “with the (unintended) opportunity of extorting illegal sums in the process [of the collection of *Jizyah*]”<sup>156</sup> he would rally all sections of the Muslims behind him through the clerical influence, not only in his conflict with the Marathas, but even more in his expected contest with the Decanni Muslim states. But this design didn’t work as his chief Qazi, Shaikh ul-Islam, son of Qazi Abdul Wahhab, refused to declare the Bijapur and Golconda campaigns as *jihad* (religiously permissible)<sup>157</sup> and was circumstantial to leave his post. He was succeeded by Qazi Abdullah

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<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, Revised 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., New Delhi, 2011, p. 31. See also tables 2(a) and especially 2(b), *idem*, p. 33.

<sup>154</sup> Jaipur Records Waqai Papers dated 29 Shaban, RY 24/14 Sep., 1680, quoted in Satish Chandra, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>156</sup> Satish Chandra, *Historiography, Religion and State in Medieval India*, p. 157.

<sup>157</sup> A.J. Syed, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

who appealed to Aurangzeb to desist from the Golconda operations because as a result of "the siege and the battles, every day a number of Mussalmans are killed on both sides" and doing so "in accordance with illustrious *Shariat*... will not be an improper kindness to the Mussalmans."<sup>158</sup> The emperor rejected this "improper request" and ordered the Qazi not to come to the court. These instances exhibit that the class to whom Aurangzeb was trying to attenuate by stressing the fundamental Islamic character of the state and by reinstituting *Jizyah*, was not satisfied with his moves and this show the vainness of such efforts. The recommencement of *Jizyah* was, thus, a meaningless gesture. It neither united the Muslim opinion behind Aurangzeb through the clergy, thus, invalidating his expansionist approach particularly his conflict with the Muslim kingdoms of the Deccan and with the Marathas nor it exhibited that the state in India could even formally be based on the *Shariat*. It only increased the plight of the poor<sup>159</sup> especially the city labourers who had to pay about one month's wage in the year as *Jizyah*.<sup>160</sup> But it is probable that ordinary labourers and people who lived from hand to mouth and were classified as *zimmi i-nadar* 'the indigent non-Muslim', i.e. who only earned enough to support himself and his family, were as such exempted from paying *Jizyah*.<sup>161</sup> Again, while Aurangzeb refused to give exemption from payment of *Jizyah*,<sup>162</sup> such exemptions it appears to have been granted regularly.<sup>163</sup> In 1704, Aurangzeb remitted the *Jizyah* throughout the Deccan on account of famine and the Maratha War for the

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> According to the rules, a rich man had to pay only 0.48 % (or 0.52 %) of his property, a middle-class man had to pay 2.6 % of his property and a poor man had to pay 6.25 % of his property annually as *Jizyah*. It shows the regressive structure of this tax and being extremely burdensome for the poor. (See Mirat i-Ahmadi, tr., p. 264 and Futuhat i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 117 for various rates of *Jizyah* applicable to different class of people.)

<sup>160</sup> Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edn., New Delhi, 2008, p. 286.

<sup>161</sup> Mirat i-Ahmadi, tr., p. 264; Futuhat i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 117.

<sup>162</sup> In a letter from Firuz Jung Khan, requesting the emperor to abolish *Jizyah* from the environs of his mother's tomb for peopling of the place, upon which Aurangzeb declined to do so. (Hamid ud-Din Khan Nimcha, *Ahkam i-Alamgiri*, tr. Jadunath Sarkar, Calcutta, 1988, p. 100.)

<sup>163</sup> Aurangzeb ordered to discontinue the payment of *Jizyah* for a year in Haiderabad. (Futuhat i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 184.)

duration of the war.<sup>164</sup> But war and famine had been prevalent in the south for a long time, so this move, as is suggested by Prof. Satish Chandra, seems to be motivated by serious efforts on Aurangzeb's part to reach a settlement with the Marathas by agreeing to Shivaji's *swarajya*, and the grant of *sardeshmukhi* of the Deccan.<sup>165</sup> These attempts, however, failed mainly because of the "unacceptable Maratha demand of *chauth* for the six *subahs* of the Deccan, and Aurangzeb's lack of trust in the Marathas."<sup>166</sup>

Though *Jizyah* was extracted with *kharaj* (land tax) in the rural areas collectively<sup>167</sup> it was levied individually in the urban areas and, thus, firmness on its personal collection in the towns was found irksome, especially by "the rapidly growing class of merchants, shop-keepers, financiers etc., who occupied an increasingly important place in the social and economic life of the country"<sup>168</sup> partly due to its discriminatory nature and fairly because of great harassment and oppression by the collectors of *Jizyah* on these people.<sup>169</sup> As a mark of resistance, they resorted on a number of occasions to *hartal* and public demonstrations.<sup>170</sup>

Thus, we see neither the commencement of *Jizyah* nor its remittance in the Deccan had any religious purpose; both of them were motivated by purely political reasons as Aurangzeb's other so called puritanical moves were themselves in nature. Neither the re-imposition of *Jizyah* facilitated large-scale conversions of Hindus to Islam as there is no proof of such conversions during

<sup>164</sup> Akhbarat 48/36 and A 245, quoted by Irfan Habib, op. cit., pp. 286-87.

<sup>165</sup> Historiography, Religion and State in Medieval India, p. 157.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>167</sup> "In all probability it [*Jizyah*] was not realized as a distinct tax payable by individual non-Muslims but was merged with *kharaj* and was treated as part of the total incidence of taxation." K.A. Nizami, Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, New Delhi, 2002, p. 331. Since land tax or revenue was levied on agricultural produce, the aforesaid situation was a countryside phenomenon.

<sup>168</sup> Satish Chandra, *Jizyah and the State*, pp. 182-83.

<sup>169</sup> See the manner of collection of *Jizyah* in *Mirat i-Ahmadi*, tr., p. 265.

<sup>170</sup> See Jaipur Records Arzdasht 704 dated 12 Jamadi I R.Y. 49/1 Oct., 1704 (*hartal* by shop-keepers of Ujjain in protest against *Jizyah*), quoted by Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 189; A.J. Syed, op. cit., pp. 275-76 (protest demonstration against *Jizyah* at Delhi).

Aurangzeb's reign on account of this measure,<sup>171</sup> nor it replenished Aurangzeb's treasury which "had begun to shrink owing to expenditure on his campaigns"<sup>172</sup> because, as we have seen, the proceeds from *Jizyah* were to be lodged in a separate treasury and were reserved for charitable purposes. Being that, *Jizyah* can be regarded as a device for reducing the pressure on the general treasury "only to the extent that it can be shown that the state found it possible to economize the amounts being disbursed out of the general treasury for paying the *yaumiyadars* or cash stipend-holders."<sup>173</sup> As we have seen, being a regressive tax, *Jizyah* only increased the grief of the poor and the urban masses and also showed "the practical impossibility of basing the state in India even formally on the *Shariat*, and of maintaining a distinction between the Hindu and the Muslim subjects on that basis."<sup>174</sup>

Although the re-imposition of *Jizyah* is seen as a climax of Aurangzeb's religious policies against the Hindus, the later part of his reign especially the period between the conquest of Bijapur and Golconda in 1687 up to his death in 1707 was a phase of the realization of political pragmatism and shedding off his religious idealism for Aurangzeb.<sup>175</sup> After over-running the Maratha territory and south India up to Jinji after 1687, Aurangzeb was now confronted with the tough job of "bringing under Imperial control the extensive country extending

<sup>171</sup> S.R. Sharma furnishes a list of 'Hindu converts to Islam' during the reign of Aurangzeb (*The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 170-74), but in comparison with the abundant Hindu population of India, these inconsequential examples don't suggest any pattern of mass conversion during that period. Cf. "... the Hindus had stubbornly clung to their faith despite the prevalence of Muslim rule in large parts of the country for over four hundred years. During most of this period, they were required to pay *Jizyah*. Aurangzeb could hardly have been sanguine enough to expect a different result from his re-imposition of the *Jizyah*... Had any such developments [mass conversion of Hindus during Aurangzeb's reign] taken place, they would have been recorded with glee by the Emperor's eulogists as a triumph of his policy." Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 172.

<sup>172</sup> Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, tr. W. Irvine, II, p. 234.

<sup>173</sup> Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 174. It has been argued that by providing separate funds for charitable purposes, *Jizyah* did relieve the pressure on the treasury by allowing the amounts hitherto spent on charity to be diverted to other purposes. But it is difficult to say to what extent this could be done in practice. (Cf. Zahiruddin Faruki, *Aurangzeb and His Times*, Bombay, 1935, rep., Delhi, 1972-80, pp. 158-60.)

<sup>174</sup> Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 183.

<sup>175</sup> For a well thought-out discussion see Satish Chandra, 'Religious Policy of Aurangzeb During the Later Part of His Reign - Some Considerations', in *Mughal Religious Policies, the Rajputs and the Deccan*, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 194-211.

up to Jinji, populated by a potentially hostile Hindu population backed up by powerful rajas and *zamindars*, with strong forts and considerable resources."<sup>176</sup> This changed situation required a modification of Aurangzeb's earlier religious policy for the reason that the policy of emphasizing the Islamic character of the empire and of projecting Aurangzeb as the defender of the true faith had ceased to yield the expected dividends. Moreover, with the collapse of the Deccani states it had also become outdated. The need now was "to adopt a milder policy in order to win over the Hindu populace, especially the landed elements in the Deccan, as well as the powerful trading communities, to the side of the Mughals."<sup>177</sup> This change is evident in the liberal policy towards the temples in the Deccan where "even when Hindu rajas and *zamindars* such as Pam Nayak, the Rani of Bangalore, the Nayaks of Madura, Jinji etc., opposed the Mughals, temples in the area were not destroyed as a measure of reprisal."<sup>178</sup> The only prominent case of temple-destruction in the south during this period was related to R.Y. 42 (1698) when Hamid ud-Din Khan Bahadur was appointed to destroy a temple in Bijapur and build a mosque in its place, and was appreciated by the Emperor for completion of the task.<sup>179</sup> One more outcome of such a milder policy was that the number of Hindus in various strata of nobility actually increased after 1679. During the period 1658 to 1678, Hindu nobles numbered 105 out of total 486 thus forming a percentage of 21.6%. But, for the duration of 1679 to 1707, they were 182 in number out of total 575 thus forming 31.6% of the nobility. The most striking thing is that during the same time, the Hindus were 26 out of 79 in the uppermost strata of the nobility (5000 *zat* and above) thus figuring about 33%, a figure which was 14.3% in 1595 and was 24.5% during Shah Jahan's reign (1628-58) and even 19.6% during the earlier

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<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 197-98.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>179</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 241.

part of Aurangzeb's reign (1658-78).<sup>180</sup> What is more interesting is the number of Rajputs and Marathas in Aurangzeb's nobility during the earlier and latter parts of his reign. Between 1658 and 1678, Rajputs and Marathas were 71 and 27 in numbers respectively, whereas during 1679 to 1707 their numbers were 73 and 96 respectively<sup>181</sup> denoting the growing importance of the Marathas without decrease in the significance of the Rajputs. Amidst the Rathor rebellion and Aurangzeb's breach with Marwar and Mewar as well as his constant struggle with Shivaji and his successors, these figures surprise us for they are misfit along with the stereotypes "popularised by [Jadunath] Sarkar that the religious policy of Aurangzeb, as it crystalised around 1679, was rigid and inflexible."<sup>182</sup>

The capture and execution of Shivaji's son and successor Sambhaji in 1689 by Aurangzeb was a political move, however, Aurangzeb tried to give it a religious gloss. On Sambhaji's capture, there was a difference of opinion among Aurangzeb's counsellors about the treatment to be meted out to him. According to Khafi Khan, "some of the councillors of state advised that their [Sambhaji and Kavi Kalash's] lives should be spared, and that they should be kept in perpetual confinement, on conditions of surrendering the keys of fortresses held by the adherents of Sambha." But, "The Emperor" he goes on to say "was in favour of seeking the opportunity of getting rid of these prime movers of strife, and hoped that with a little exertion their fortress would be reduced. He, therefore, rejected the advice..."<sup>183</sup> Aurangzeb's belief in the superior strength of Mughal army which would force the Marathas to accept his terms was at the base of this rejection. Though, for a religious justification of this political act, Aurangzeb referred the matter to "masters of the Holy law and Faith" and "the

<sup>180</sup> For numbers and percentage of Hindus in various echelons of the nobility during the reigns of Akbar, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb see M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb*, p. 31.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>182</sup> Satish Chandra, *Historiography, Religion and State in Medieval India*, pp. 157-58.

<sup>183</sup> *Muntakhab ul-Lubab*, vol. II, Bib. Ind., pp. 388-89, quoted by Satish Chandra, *Religious Policy of Aurangzeb During the Later Part of His Reign*, pp. 200-201.

dignitaries of the Church and state" who decreed Sambhaji's execution "in consideration of the harshness and insult that he had practiced by slaying and imprisoning Muslims and plundering the cities of Islam..."<sup>184</sup> However, Aurangzeb made it clear that his hostility was particularly towards Sambhaji as an individual, not towards the descendants of Shivaji in general. Thus, after the execution of Sambhaji, his son Shahu, was lodged in the *gulalbar*<sup>185</sup> next to the emperor, and granted a *mansab* of 7000/7000.<sup>186</sup>

In 1699, Aurangzeb tried to depict the war against the Marathas as a *ghazw*<sup>187</sup> or holy war, and his earlier declaration of 1681 that any war prisoner who converted to Islam would be pardoned<sup>188</sup> couldn't prevent unemployed Muslim soldiers, formerly in the service of the Deccani rulers, to have recourse to the Marathas. This compelled Aurangzeb to deviate from the Hanafi law to drive a lesson home that rebels would be treated as rebels irrespective of their religious affiliations. A case in point may be cited. During the prolonged siege of Satara, four Muslims and nine Hindu soldiers were captured out of a group which made a sortie from the fort. Aurangzeb ordered Qazi Muhammad Akram, the court qazi, to investigate the case with the help of the muftis and report what action should be taken against them. The Qazi proposed that if the Hindus accepted Islam they should be released, and that the Muslims should be kept in prison for three years. Aurangzeb rejected the suggestion and wrote across the petition that the Qazi should decide the case according to some other school than the Hanafi school "so that control over the kingdom may not be lost." Accordingly, the Qazi recommended on the basis of *Fatawa i-Alamgiri* that

<sup>184</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, Bib. Ind., p. 324, quoted by Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 201.

<sup>185</sup> During the hunting or war expeditions, the Mughal emperors carried their women with them. In the royal encampment the female quarters were situated within the *gulalbar* during the reign of Akbar. According to Abul Fazl, "The *gulalbar* is a grand wooden enclosure, the invention of His Majesty [Akbar], the doors of which are made very strong and secured with locks and keys where watchmen were stationed." (Ain i-Akbari, I, p. 50; tr. Blochmann, I, p. 47), quoted by Simmi Jain, Encyclopaedia of Indian Women Through the Ages, 4 vols., vol. II: The Middle Ages, Delhi, 2003, p. 150.

<sup>186</sup> Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 201.

<sup>187</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, p. 410, quoted by Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 204.

<sup>188</sup> Akhbarat, 26 September, 1681, quoted by Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 204.

"the Hindu and Muslim prisoners of war should be executed as a deterrent." The emperor gave his agreement to this decision.<sup>189</sup> This is another fine example of Aurangzeb's growing political realism.

We have seen above that Aurangzeb pretended to provide Islamic character to the state, albeit unsuccessfully, chiefly to strengthen his position and achieve political objectives. Despite this, he had an exalted notion about the nature and purpose of sovereignty, although there was a shift in approach during the early and later parts of his reign. In his correspondence with Shah Jahan after the latter's detention, Aurangzeb expressed a very dignified view regarding the nature of suzerainty. He says, "Kingship means the protection of the realm and the guardianship (of the people) and not the enjoyment of bodily repose or the lusts of the flesh." Considering kingship as a gift of God like his grandfather, he says rather self-righteously, "If God had not approved of my enterprise, how could I have gained victories which are only His gift?" Amalgamating religion and worldly affairs in his distinctive manner, he asserts that he had taken up the task of kingship out of necessity for "restoring peace and the rule of Islam in the realm so as to be able to answer on the day of Reckoning." This task was joined with "saving the people from destruction and the affairs of my ancestral kingdom from confusion."<sup>190</sup> Here Aurangzeb's religious idealism prevails throughout.

Aurangzeb's advice to his sons and grandsons during his later years, collected in the *Kalimat i-Taiyyabat*, contains his sense of self-righteousness intact, but there is barely any stress on religion. The frequent and endorsing references to Shah Jahan, as also, in a few cases, to Akbar made by Aurangzeb in these letters, when he was under strain during the later part of his reign, indicate that Aurangzeb was "trying to portray his own actions and policies as being in consonance with the actions of his esteemed predecessors, thereby,

<sup>189</sup> Ahkam i-Alamgiri, tr., pp. 98-99.

<sup>190</sup> Adab i-Alamgiri (Abdus Salam Collection, Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh), ff. 260a-264a, quoted by Satish Chandra, op. cit., pp. 204-05.



seeking further legalization."<sup>191</sup> His concept of sovereignty, as emerges from these letters, is fully in agreement with the Timurid ideals and traditional Indian value-system. Thus, the concept of justice is upheld as one of the highest ideals. The princes are advised to devote themselves to the task of protecting the poor and chastising the oppressors. No particular emphasis is given to the task of defending the faith and punishing the irreligious or waging war against the infidels. On the contrary, the proper discharge of the duties of sovereignty and attention to the necessary worldly tasks are upheld as being truly religious (*amur i-zaruri dunyavi bil-haqiqat dini ast*) and enjoined by Holy Law and reliable Traditions (*shara wa urfa ahadis*) and history books. In an advice to his grandson Azim ush-Shan, Aurangzeb said almost echoing Abul Fazl, "You should consider the protection of the subjects as the source of happiness in this world and hereafter."<sup>192</sup> At this point, as a consequence of the apprehension of political realism which is consistent with the demands of kingship and appropriate to the secular nature of sovereignty, Aurangzeb is trying to shed off his religious idealism which he had kept so far, knowingly or unknowingly. In this regard it may be safely concluded that "the emphasis on religion [by Aurangzeb] during the early phase of his reign was predicated on a particular political situation, and that Aurangzeb more or less reverted to a traditional view of state and suzerainty during the later part of his reign, that is, in a changed political situation [i.e. assimilation of the Decanni states and expansion of the empire up to Jinji, capture and execution of Sambhaji and later renewed efforts on Aurangzeb's part to come to terms with the Marathas]."<sup>193</sup>

Although orthodox in his temperament, Aurangzeb made a point of meeting visiting Sufis and going to the graves of well-known saints. Many of the saints he visited, who were revered locally, were *wujudis*. Thus, in 1686, before proceeding to the conquest of Golconda, Aurangzeb went to Gulbarga

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>192</sup> Kalimat i-Taiyyabat, ed., M. Abdul Wahid, Kanpur, n.d., quoted by Satish Chandra, op. cit., pp. 205-06.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

and stayed for a week at the mausoleum of the well-known Chishti saint, Gesu Daraz and distributed twenty thousand rupees among the representatives of the saint and the residents including the hermits and beggars.<sup>194</sup> Earlier, when he reached Burhanpur, he visited the tomb of Shaikh Abdul Latif, a famous orthodox saint, and prayed to the saint's soul for assistance in crushing the enemy of the true faith.<sup>195</sup> It is obvious through these instances that Aurangzeb's visits to the tombs of saints had many implications besides religious, i.e. to make stronger the determination of his own forces, to mollify and impress the public opinion etc. Aurangzeb didn't confine himself to Sufi saints alone in this respect. As we have seen, he had at good terms with the Jogis of Jakhbar, the priests of Vrindavan and the Sikh religious divine Ram Rai. While camping at the fort of Mandsaur on his way to the Deccan war, Aurangzeb held a discussion on Truth and Devotion with Shiv Mangaldas Maharaj, the leader of the Khaki Bairagi saints. The Emperor was pleased to know that in his realm there was such an angelic saint (like Mangaldas) upon whom he was pleased to fix an annuity of five rupees, along with a *khilat*, a horse, a drum, a mace, a silver umbrella, and 200 *dirhams*.<sup>196</sup> Aurangzeb didn't oppose to his sons Muhammad Muazzam (Shah Alam) and Muhammad Azam from consorting with liberal divines, so much so that both of them earned the reputation of being Shiites. This indicates that the atmosphere at the court was not as restricted and intolerant as we are sometimes led to believe. It was perhaps one important reason why the succeeding eighteenth century is characterized as the age of liberalism and cultural syncretism which found its best expression in the Urdu poetry of that time. The Urdu poets of the eighteenth century "while not openly flouting the *Shariat*... adopted a broad, eclectic approach to religion and philosophy, so much so that the Brahman became the symbol of 'faithful' and

<sup>194</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., pp. 175-76.

<sup>195</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, p. 216, quoted by Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 207.

<sup>196</sup> S.K. Bhatt, 'Two Persian Documents Relating to the Religious Policy of the Mughals: A *Parwanah* of Aurangzeb, 1112 A.H. and a *Parwanah* of Muhammad Shah, 13 Julus (1143-44 A.H.)' *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 36<sup>th</sup> Session, Aligarh, 1975, pp. 358-61.

the Shaikh of the 'narrow dogmatist!'"<sup>197</sup> Mirza Muhammad Rafi 'Sauda', one of the foremost Urdu poets of the eighteenth century, wrote while attacking the fanaticism of the theologians:

*tod kar butkhane ko masjid bina ki toone shaikh,  
birehman ke dil ki bhi kuchh fikr hai tamir ka.*<sup>198</sup>

[O Shaikh! You have constructed the mosque after demolishing the idol temple, but have you any sense how to please (literally, construct) the heart of the Brahman?]

Some of the saints of the time were not at all impressed at Aurangzeb being called a Shaikh or faqir "who reveals the ascetic behind the veil of the king and exalts asceticism by this type of kingship who had reached such a degree of holiness as to train a disciple and lead him up to the rank (of a perfect hermit)."<sup>199</sup> The well known Chishti saint Shaikh Kalimullah not only held orthodox mullahs to ridicule, but he also accused Aurangzeb of hypocrisy and presumptuousness in trying to combine *sultanat* or worldly rule with *faqiri* or spirituality.<sup>200</sup> But, despite all the liberal and politically realistic exertions made by Aurangzeb during the later part of his reign, he got a certain image in the eyes of posterity especially the uneducated masses of India, as Dr. K.R. Qanungo had rightly remarked, "Nowhere in the world and in no age, the hero of popular imagination has ever been the real historical character, Charlemagne, Harun al-Rashid, Peter the Great, and Shivaji in the light of historical research are not as they figure in the imagination of the unlettered mass of their own countrymen. If the ideal king Ramchandra cannot be blamed for cutting off the head of a Shudra ascetic as the poet Bhavabhuti paints his hero, – Aurangzeb can hardly be blamed for putting Sarmad and Dara to death,

<sup>197</sup> Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>198</sup> Quoted by Ishrat Haq, 'Social Conditions as Reflected in the Urdu Literature of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century' (Hindi), in Harishchandra Verma, ed., *Madhyakalin Bharat (Medieval India)*, vol. II, Delhi, 1999, p. 830.

<sup>199</sup> Masir i-Alamgiri, tr., p. 201.

<sup>200</sup> Shaikh Kalimullah, *Maktubat i-Kalimi*, pp. 45 and 55, quoted by S.A.A. Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India*, p. 375.

or what he did towards those whom he deemed the enemies of true religion. The misfortune of Aurangzeb was that he lived in a historical age, and had the full light of history focussed on him.”<sup>201</sup> Aurangzeb’s unluckiness is evident in the following couplet which depicts what he is in the popular imagination through the eyes of an aggrieved poet:

*tumhein le-deke sari dastan mein yad hai itna,  
ke alamgir hindukash tha, zalim tha, sitamgar tha.*<sup>202</sup>

[Of the whole story (the entire duration of the Muslim rule in India), they remember only this much that Alamgir (Aurangzeb) was a butcher of Hindus, and a tyrannical and cruel monarch.]

But it was not the real unluckiness of Aurangzeb; his real ill luck was being a “somewhat rigid and unimaginative politician” and “representative of an old order which was unable and unwilling to recognise much less face the stirrings and incipient growth of a new socio-economic system”<sup>203</sup> and it failed him to comprehend various societal problems at work in the country, and forced him to take recourse to religious slogans in order to meet complex socio-economic and political problems. And, it represents him neither a hero nor a villain—just an ordinary person operated by circumstances, though he was a monarch!

<sup>201</sup> K.R. Qanungo, *Dara Shukoh*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1952, pp. 273-74.

<sup>202</sup> Quoted by B.N. Pande, ‘Distortion of Medieval Indian History’, in *Islam and Indian Culture*, Patna, 1994, p. 37.

<sup>203</sup> Satish Chandra, *Historiography, Religion and State in Medieval India*, p. 162.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FIRST HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: THE HEYDAY OF CULTURAL FUSION**

Unlike the preceding 150 years, the eighteenth century didn't witness any central figure like Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, or Aurangzeb that headed the state despotically and moulded the course of time single-handedly by sheer dint of their exertions, either positive or negative, especially in the cultural sphere and particularly affecting the process of cultural synthesis between the two major religious persuasions of the country. Although it was a period of centrifugal tendencies as far as political authority is concerned, yet in the field of culture the contribution of this period is multifarious. "During the eighteenth century the Mughal Empire disintegrated and its whole administrative structure collapsed; yet, paradoxically, the Mughal culture attained its most fully developed form and continued to exercise a great shaping influence on the texture of society for a long time. The kings and ministers failed to gain military success against their enemies and sustain the decaying administrative institutions. They, nevertheless, continued to patronize liberally the artists and men of learning whose splendid accomplishments in a way counterbalanced these serious military setbacks and other failures. The royal court... was instrumental in fostering an unprecedented expansion of art, literature, philosophy and science."<sup>1</sup>

Amidst the tendencies of political decay and party factionalism in the Mughal court, "the Mughal nobles, governors and local chieftains were primarily moved by the ambition of gaining political power, but they also combined the life of court and camp with a passion for intellectual pursuits—for poetry, music, philosophy and science... While political developments took their own course the poets, scholars, and artists remained engaged, serene and

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<sup>1</sup> Zahiruddin Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, Bombay, 1977, p. 342.

undisturbed, in extending the frontiers of knowledge, reflecting the aims and aspirations of the common people, and cherishing such values and ideals as were likely to transfigure their life and being."<sup>2</sup> "When the political power of the Mughals" Prof. Zahiruddin Malik goes on to say, "came to an end, these artists, poets and scholars flocked to the princely courts and got warm reception there. The chieftains and governors patronized these artists who added brilliance to their courts which in the late eighteenth century became centres of culture and civilization."<sup>3</sup> Thus, through these poets, scholars and artists the substance of Mughal culture "penetrated widely, affecting the social institutions and giving a new direction to the intellectual and aesthetic outlook of the people."<sup>4</sup> In the light of the statement mentioned above, it can be deduced that "the 'succession states' like Hyderabad, Bengal and Awadh, which were really fragments of the [Mughal] Empire... [and which] inherited more or less the entire Mughal machinery in a working order"<sup>5</sup> followed the same pattern of cultural patronage as did the Mughal Empire. The Maratha power "while... might use certain Mughal administrative institutions for [his] own purposes" and his "mode of government was by and large antithetical to that of the [Mughal] Empire, and could not be reconciled with it,"<sup>6</sup> still it adopted "the paraphernalia of their [the Mughals'] cultural life."<sup>7</sup>

Though it is rather difficult to undertake a comprehensive survey of regional cultures which flourished at that time, the broad features of the regional cultures may be discerned by restricting ourselves "to the imperial court and the city of Delhi. This may serve as a sample to understand the patterns of culture prevailing in other capital cities—Hyderabad, Lucknow,

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 343.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> M. Athar Ali, *Mughal India: Studies in Polity, Ideas, Society, and Culture*, ed., Irfan Habib, New Delhi, 2007, p. 343.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Zahiruddin Malik, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

Murshidabad, Lahore, Jaipur and Ahmadabad.”<sup>8</sup> So, in short, by concentrating ourselves primarily to the city of Delhi, we may draw a rough sketch of the cultural milieu prevailing at the time.

Three characteristic features of the eighteenth century may be discerned which added new dimensions to the question of Hindu-Muslim relations, viz. springing up of a large number of Hindu sages and preachers especially from the lower strata of society and joining up their sects by the Muslims, greatest contribution to Persian language and literature made by the Hindu scholars, and evolution of a distinctive outlook of reverence towards Hinduism by the Muslims.

“It is strange to find that when Mughal imperial power was dissolving and Marathas and other regional forces were establishing their autonomous principalities, a number of Hindu reformers and saints sprang from lower orders of society to preach the gospel of unity of God, religious tolerance, peace and social harmony in different parts of northern India.”<sup>9</sup> Eighteenth century is comparatively much productive and fertile in the sense of giving birth to new religious cults. “Besides the older religious sects of the early medieval period, there sprang up during the period under review [eighteenth century] some new ones. With very few exceptions which were either of an eclectic or monotheistic nature, the rest of the latter were *Vaishnava* sects and their founders belonged mostly to the non-Brahmanical castes. There was one feature common to nearly all these sects, viz. Guru-worship.”<sup>10</sup> The saints having faith in monotheism derived their inspiration from the religious philosophy of Kabir, Nanak and other saints belonging to the *bhakti* cult. Pran Nath, Jagjivandas, Charan Das, Gharibdas, Ram Charan, Swami Narayan Singh, Majnun Nanak Shah and a

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 345.

<sup>9</sup> Zahiruddin Malik, *The Core and the Periphery: A Contribution to the Debate on the Eighteenth Century*, Presidential Address: Medieval India Section, Indian History Congress, 51<sup>st</sup> Session, Calcutta, 1990, p. 32.

<sup>10</sup> K.K. Datta, *Survey of India's Social Life and Economic Condition in the Eighteenth Century (1707-1813)*, Calcutta, 1961, pp. 3-4.

host of other saints established new sects in different parts of northern India and gave currency to the principles of monotheism, religious tolerance and humanism. "The whole tenor of their teaching was directed towards the weakening the hold of dogma and superstition and establishing the supremacy of liberal thought over the disposition of men. The movement produced results that were conducive to the realisation of religious unity and social integration. These saints received homage from all classes of people, including the Muslims."<sup>11</sup>

Jagjivandas, a native of Barabanki district in Uttar Pradesh, belonged to the school of Kabir and preached the doctrine of unity of God, whom he regarded as *nirguna* (beyond all qualities). He drew his disciples from all classes of society—Brahman, Thakur, Chamar and Muslims and became successful in setting up a number of similarity of thought between himself and Islam.<sup>12</sup> The *Charan Dasi* sect was founded at Delhi about the middle of the eighteenth century by Charan Das, a Dhusar Bania by caste and an inhabitant of Alwar in Rajasthan. He led the life of a householder and admitted both men and women of all castes as his disciples. Sahjo and Dayabai were two sisters who were his pupils and who have acquired fame by their hymns. Charan Das condemned idolatry and emphasized the unity of God, the value of dependence upon His name, the need of devotion and, thus, having a similarity to the teachings of Kabir.<sup>13</sup> Ram Charan, founder of the *Ram Sanehi* order, denounced caste distinctions, staunchly opposed idol-worship and was, therefore, subject to persecution by the Brahmans. The mode of religious services prescribed by him for his followers bore resemblance to that of the Muslims.<sup>14</sup> The *Shivanarayani* order was established in 1734 at Delhi by Shiva Narayan or Swami Narayan Singh. A firm believer in monotheism and a strong opponent of idolatry, he

<sup>11</sup> The Reign of Muhammad Shah, p. 349.

<sup>12</sup> Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, Allahabad, 1963, p. 200; See also K.K. Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, p. 203; K.K. Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, p. 205; K.K. Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 6.



adored the Absolute (*Par Brahma*) alone. He admitted as his followers men of all denominations without any distinction of caste or creed. The Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah was so much influenced by Swami Narayan that he became his disciple. Admission of the emperor certainly enhanced the prestige and popularity of the sect.<sup>15</sup> Gharibdas, a Jat by caste and a householder in life, belonged to the school of Kabir and as a result "his verses abound with Persian terms and Sufi allusions."<sup>16</sup> Having a cosmopolitan attitude, he "was opposed to external ceremonialism, emphasised on love and devotion of a man's inner self as the true ways of salvation and made no distinction of caste or creed."<sup>17</sup> Majnun Nanak Shah was a famous saint of Delhi and lived on the bank of Yamuna. He drew a large following of the Hindus and the Muslims, especially the rich who offered costly gifts to him.<sup>18</sup> Admiring the profitability of his company, Dargah Quli Khan says, "For all those who are for 'Peace with all' it is [difficult] to leave his hospice, as his company is conducive to that state."<sup>19</sup> Area of activity of Aulechand and Balram Hari, originators of *Karta Bhaja* and *Balrami* sects respectively, was Nadia district in Bengal. They made no distinction of caste, Aulechand had both Hindu as well as Muslim followers and Balram Hari opposed idol-worship.<sup>20</sup>

Amongst the Hindu monotheists during this period the most exceptional was Pran Nath, the chief disciple of Dev Chandra who was the founder of *Pranami Sampradaya*, a liberal and reformist movement within Hinduism. Pran Nath is considered as the second great teacher of this sect after Dev Chandra and has the credit of transforming the former's ideas into a new sect, thereby propagating it.<sup>21</sup> The principle scripture of this sect is *Kulzum*, also called *Kulzum Sarup* and *Tartamya Sagar*, an extensive collection of the utterances or

<sup>15</sup> Tara Chand, op. cit., pp. 205-06; K.K. Datta, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 205.

<sup>17</sup> K.K. Datta, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa i-Dehli*, tr. Chander Shekhar and Shama Mitra Chenoy, Delhi, 1996, p. 31.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>20</sup> K.K. Datta, op. cit., pp. 4, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Bhagwan Das Gupta, *Maharaja Chhatrasal Bundela*, Agra, 1958, p. 104.

preaching of Pran Nath in the Gujarati language. The significance of this book lies in the fact that following the *Majma ul-Bahrain* of Prince Dara Shikoh, it is only the second attempt in which it is shown "that the ideals underlying the two religions [Islam and Hinduism] were the same and there were marked similarities between the philosophies embodied in the *Quran* and the *Vedas*."<sup>22</sup> Pran Nath believed in one God; denounced religious evils—formalism, superstitions and fanaticism equally prevailed among the Hindus as well as the Muslims; condemned idolatry, rigid shackles of caste system and supremacy of the Brahmans; and he laid stress on the nobility of Karma and the equality of mankind.<sup>23</sup> He had to face stiff opposition from high-born Hindus as well as Brahmans due to his liberal and egalitarian outlook. Pran Nath was the spiritual preceptor of Chhatrasal Bundela upon whom he acquired great influence. "Through his contact with the saint, Raja Chhatrasal developed great regard for Islam and its Prophet in whose praise he recited two couplets every morning after taking bath."<sup>24</sup>

Assessing the contribution made by these saints, Prof. Zahiruddin Malik comments, "... these thinkers and preachers attempted to blend together diverse elements embedded in the two religious systems and tried to evolve a common basis for spiritual life and social harmony. Their message of brotherly love and humanitarianism made a wide appeal among the people and set new trends in favour of cultural synthesis and religious toleration."<sup>25</sup>

It was the liberal atmosphere generated during the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries by Akbar, Jahangir, Dara Shikoh, Mulla Shah, Sarmad Shahid, and a host of other liberal Muslims together with the teachings of the saints aforementioned that exercised a profound impact on the Muslims and which resulted in joining up the company of *Yogis* and *Bairagis* by the Muslims of even

<sup>22</sup> The Reign of Muhammad Shah, p. 350.

<sup>23</sup> Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 199; Bhagwan Das Gupta, op. cit., pp. 108, 109, 110, 111.

<sup>24</sup> The Reign of Muhammad Shah, p. 350.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

respectable families during the eighteenth century. Many of the Muslims joined the Hindu Shanwi sect.<sup>26</sup> Corresponding to this process, there were some other sects of the Hindus, besides the Shanwis, who appreciated the dress, food, and manners of the Muslims and joined the disciples of Sufis. Many of them had inclination towards Shiism as a result of the influence of the Nawabs of Awadh.<sup>27</sup>

Analyzing various psycho-emotional causes of the growth of *nirguna* as well as *saguna bhakti* in a historical perspective, Dr. Tara Chand aptly remarks, "In all human societies there are groups of men of different spiritual needs; for instance, it is impossible for one group of men to conceive of God except in absolute terms, and their intellectual bias excludes from that conception every human quality; then there is another group which supremely feels the want of a God who is something in common with themselves, who is not a mere abstract impersonal entity, an abstract and impersonal consciousness, command, or love, but something that is personal, a teacher, a ruler, a father, a lover; still others need an even more concrete personality on whom they can depend, a person who can stand before them as an ideal, or a person in whose history they can take a living interest, in short an incarnation of God who dwells amidst men and shares with man his sorrows, grieves and burdens."<sup>28</sup> In short, the concept of *nirguna* Brahma quenches one's intellectual and logical thirst whereas the perception of *saguna* Brahma satisfies a person's emotional and sensitive needs. Both the ideas are in the sense complementary in catering a man's various intellectual-emotional needs and, thus, providing him a balanced personality. Among the worshippers of the qualified (*saguna*) Brahma, some believe in incarnations whereas the others not. For the worshipper of the absolute (*nirguna*) Brahma, He may be transcendental or immanent or both.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Muhammad Umar, *Islam in Northern India During the Eighteenth Century*, New Delhi, 1993, p. 442.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 445.

<sup>28</sup> *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, p. 210.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

"The radical reformers [Kabir, Nanak, Dadu etc.] were generally speaking worshippers of the absolute who was both transcendent and immanent and as the Muslim Sufi had the same conception of God, the two came together and saw that there was no essential difference in their religions."<sup>30</sup> The followers of the *saguna* Brahma were the worshippers of Shiva and Vishnu, the latter in his two incarnations as Rama or Krishna. "They had their counterpart among orthodox Muslims who regarded God as the Lord and Ruler; but it was impossible for these two to make any approach towards an understanding, because both were entrenched behind fixed systems of revealed books, inspired and irrevocable commands, and divinely sanctioned rites and institutions. To this group mainly belonged the conservatives, the learned on both sides, and the priests whose interests were vested in the maintenance of a particular social and economic order."<sup>31</sup> But, the situation was not so gloomy and depressing as it seems—thoughts and ideas don't grow in isolation especially when there is twin of such kind simultaneously exist. In course of time both Hinduism and Islam influence each other and were being influenced by one another as is evident by the fact that "the presence of Islam in India could hardly fail to impress even them [followers of *saguna* Bhakti] and they too showed in certain aspects its influence."<sup>32</sup> It has been shown by Dr. Tara Chand that Hinduism in the south reacted in a particular way to the impetus given by Islam and "contact with Islam accentuated its monotheism, tended to remove disqualifications of caste; strengthened the movement of devotion, introduced new elements in its doctrines about the teacher, relaxed the rigours of the cult without entirely abolishing it, and encouraged the use of the popular languages."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

"The eighteenth century was truly the culminating age of Indo-Persian historiography, lexicography, calligraphy, arts of epistolary and news-writing, bio-graphical glossaries, translations and administrative manuals. It was also the age of the ascendancy of Hindu scholars, writers and poets who left the imprint of their lasting contribution on all these varied fields of the Persian literature. They had their own schools in towns and cities to teach elementary as well as advanced courses in Persian to students of both communities... Their mastery of the arts of literary composition and accountancy opened for them avenues of employment in public and private revenue establishments, and the experience they gained in the course of service enabled them to compile works on these subjects in Persian."<sup>34</sup> The adoption of Persian as a medium of literary genre, as we have seen in the Introduction, was a process started even before the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi. Tilak, the barber, who was a principal military officer under Mahmud of Ghazni and who later became a secretary of Khwaja Ahmad Hasan, wazir of Mahmud's son and successor Masud, could write an excellent hand in Persian besides Hindi. This process remained continued during the entire period of the Sultanate and especially in the reign of Sikandar Lodi, during which "it appears that very shortly a Persian-knowing group had emerged, a few among them were, in the true sense, the masters of the knowledge [had mastery over the Persian language]."<sup>35</sup> During this reign, a Hindu Pundit Dungar Mal, mentioned by Badayuni as Brahman, used to teach Persian and Arabic books and to compose poetry in Persian.<sup>36</sup> But, this process took a definite shape in the reign of Akbar who by adopting a three-fold policy<sup>37</sup>—general tolerance for the Hindus, general and secular education, and patronage and promotion to Hindu learning and arts—heralded a new encouraging and growing phase in the Persian language and

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<sup>34</sup> The Core and the Periphery, p. 36.

<sup>35</sup> S. Abdullah, *Adabiyat i-Farsi Mein Hinduon Ka Hissah*, Lahore, 1967, p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8, see especially fn. 2.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

literature as during this period excellent books of history had been written in Persian and books of different languages being translated into it.<sup>38</sup> Although the literary output of the period especially by the Hindus is fewer for the reason that they hadn't acquired up till now the command over the language which was essential for writing and compilation, yet their contribution to the fine arts—painting, music and calligraphy—is impressive.<sup>39</sup>

During the period between 1605 to 1712-13, i.e. from the accession of Jahangir to the reign of Jahandar Shah, Hindus contributed to almost every branch of knowledge and produced a great deal of useful and excellent literature.<sup>40</sup> In the fields of history and letter-writing, the contribution made by Hindu scholars and writers during this phase is exceptional. Chandra Bhan Brahman (*Chahar Chaman*), Brindaban Das (*Lub ut-Tawarikh*), Sujan Rai Bhandari (*Khulasat ut-Tawarikh*), Ishar Das Nagar (*Futuhut i-Alamgiri*), Bhim Sen (*Tarikh i-Dilkasha*), Kamraj (*Azam ul-Harb & Ibratnamah*), Jagjivan Das (*Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh*) and Narayan Kaul 'Ajiz' (*Tarikh i-Kashmir*) were the prominent historians of this age.<sup>41</sup> Munshi Har Karan (*Insha i-Har Karan*), Chandra Bhan Brahman (*Munshat Brahman*), Munshi Madho Ram (*Insha i-Madho Ram*), Malik Zadah Munshi (*Nigarnamah*) and Munshi Udey Raj (*Haft Anjuman*) were the fine example of letter-writing and collection of letters.<sup>42</sup>

It was the golden period of Persian literature written by Hindus in between 1713 to 1806, i.e. from the ostensible reign of Farrukhsiyar to the titular rule of Shah Alam II. Due to abundant number of poets and historians, this age is exceeded to all epochs, because now numerous centres of learning and of patronage to writing and compilation—Lucknow, Hyderabad, Azimabad, Murshidabad etc.—had emerged instead of a single centre (Delhi). Dr. Syed Abdullah is of the opinion that this entire century was a century of lexicons and

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 31-33.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 54-69.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 69-79.

biographies (of poets).<sup>43</sup> Although the Hindus wrote maximum number of books on History in this period "but except one or two none is of first-rate which maybe equal in rank to *Khulasat ut-Tawarikh* or which deserves a status or credence in the literature."<sup>44</sup> Khushhal Chand Kayastha (*Tarikh i-Muhammad Shahi*), Raizadah Chaturman (*Chahar Gulshan*) and Lakshmi Narayan 'Shafiq' Aurangabadi (*Haqiqatha i-Hindostan*, *Masir i-Asafi*, *Bisat ul-Ghanaim*, *Halat i-Haidarabad* etc.) were the most outstanding historians of this period.<sup>45</sup> Brindaban Das Khushgu (*Safina i-Khushgu*), Lakshmi Narayan 'Shafiq' (*Gul i-Rana*, *Chamanistan Shuara*), Kishan Chand 'Ikhlās' (*Hameshah Bahar*) and Mohan Lal 'Anis' (*Anis ul-Ahba*)<sup>46</sup> were the famous biographers of this period; these books are considered to be a major source of information for the history of contemporary poetry. "One of the peculiar features of *Gul i-Rana* and *Anis ul-Ahba* is that they contain the account of Hindu poets in particular which is very helpful to us."<sup>47</sup> But, it were the lexicographers of the age, especially the Hindu ones— Rai Anand Ram 'Mukhlis' (*Mirat ul-Istelah*), Sialkoti Mal 'Warastah' (*Mustalhat i-Warastah*) and Munshi Tek Chand 'Bahar' (*Bahar i-Ajam*)—whose books are the essence of all the Persian literature contributed by the Hindus. "*Mustalhat i-Warastah* and *Bahar i-Ajam* are the two magnificent works having great significance amidst all the Persian literature of India."<sup>48</sup> Following the reign of Aurangzeb amidst new circumstances caused by the decreasing influx of the Iranians who were considered to be adept in the Persian in the real sense, causing severe controversy over the use of daily and modern idioms and due to wrong use of the Persian by the inexperienced clerks of the imperial offices, it was strongly felt that in order to set a standard of correct and reliable Persian, the usage of the idioms must be examined and new kind of books must be

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 94, 95.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 102-105.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 106-111.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 94-95.

written to evolve pure and chaste language.<sup>49</sup> That's why the eighteenth century produced so many lexicographers among whom the status of the Hindu lexicographers is very high and this point deserves to be special attention. We have seen earlier that during the reign of Akbar, literary output in the Persian by the Hindus is less due to their lack of expertise over the language but it's a pleasant surprise that within a period of less than 150 years, they were in a position to compile dictionaries<sup>50</sup> which shows their swift speed of ascertaining themselves to the minutiae of the language by way of possessing its thorough knowledge.

Anand Ram 'Mukhlis' a native of Sodhra (presently in the district Sialkot, Pakistan) was a *wakil* of wazir Itimad ud-Daulah during the reign of Muhammad Shah<sup>51</sup> and was a prolific writer who contributed in the fields of epistolary (*Ruqqat i-Mukhlis*),<sup>52</sup> fiction (*Hangama i-Ishq* and *Karnama i-Ishq*),<sup>53</sup> biography (*Badae Waqae* or *Tazkirah*)<sup>54</sup> and poetry (*Diwan i-Nazm*)<sup>55</sup> but his most valuable literary work, as said earlier, is *Mirat ul-Istelah*, a dictionary of Persian idioms and metaphors, arranged alphabetically. An extraordinary feature of the book is that during the course of explaining words, stories and jokes have also been added by the lexicographer which occasionally shows his experiences besides his personal details and contemporary social conditions.<sup>56</sup> This interesting style of compilation is a mark of distinction for this book despite its not being as detailed as *Bahar i-Ajam* and is limited to only a few terms.<sup>57</sup>

Sialkoti Mal 'Warastah' was a native of Sialkot as his name itself suggests. Very little is known about his personal details—educational, ancestral and other particulars. He was a disciple of Mir Muhammad Ali 'Raej' Sialkoti, a

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 94, 131.

<sup>50</sup> The date of compilation of *Mirat ul-Istelah* is 1158 A.H. (1745-46 A.D.). S. Abdullah, op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.



poet of some distinction.<sup>58</sup> Although 'Warastah' wrote many books, e.g. *Matla us-Sadain*, *Sifat i-Kayenat*, *Rajm ul-Shayatin*, *Jang i-Ranga Rang*, the epitome of his scholarship is *Mustalhat i-Warastah*, also called *Mustalhat ush-Shuara*. It is a collection of modern idioms and selected terms, completed in 1766-67.<sup>59</sup> The outstanding feature of this work is that it is a critical collection of the Persian idioms<sup>60</sup> for 'Warastah' was the only person among all his contemporaries who had an outstanding critical vision.<sup>61</sup> Although he was profited from the first edition of *Bahar i-Ajam*, viewed its statements and explanations with extremely critical manner, yet *Mustalhat* was wholly incorporated in the second edition of *Bahar*.<sup>62</sup> And, this certainly enhanced the value of *Bahar i-Ajam*.

Munshi Tek Chand 'Bahar' was an inhabitant of Delhi and was among the pupils of Siraj ud-Din 'Arzu' and Shaikh Abul Khair Khairullah 'Wafai' and was a friend of Mir Taqi 'Mir'.<sup>63</sup> A writer of many books, e.g. *Jawahir ul-Huruf*, *Nawadir ul-Masadir*, *Jawahir ul-Tarkib* etc., the everlasting source of his prominence is his book *Bahar i-Ajam*, for which Blochmann observed, "*Bahar i-Ajam* is the largest dictionary sprung out from the pen of a single person."<sup>64</sup> This certainly exhibits the comprehensiveness of the book which is its mark of distinction. We don't know of any book except the *Bahar*, in which the Persian phrases have been collected so exhaustively. Dr. S. Abdullah has evaluated the everlasting worth of this book in the following words, "In India if any other literary exertion made by Hindu literati except this book would have been absent, even though *Bahar* would have found its place amidst the whole of the

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>62</sup> "[Munshi Tek Chand] Bahar has incorporated this book [*Mustalhat*] completely in *Bahar i-Ajam*. That's why this tract didn't gain much popularity." Blochmann, *Contributions*, quoted by S. Abdullah, op. cit., p. 156.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>64</sup> Blochmann, *Contributions*, p. 28, quoted by S. Abdullah, op. cit., p. 164.

Persian literature and on that basis, share of the Hindus in the Persian literature would have been considered precious.”<sup>65</sup>

The evolution of an attitude of equivalence towards Hinduism by the Muslims, a distinctive feature of the eighteenth century, was not by any means a novel one, it evolved gradually and has its roots way back to the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century in the utterances of our great saint—*Sultan ul-Mashaikh, Mahboob i-Ilahi*, Hazrat Shaikh Khwaja Syed Muhammad Nizam ud-Din Auliya (1238–1325)—who in a morning seeing the Hindus worshipping their deities said, “*Har Qaum Rast Rahe, Dine wa Qiblagah*”<sup>66</sup> (Every people has its Right path, its Religion and its Temple). Thus, the cornerstone of his philosophy was tolerance towards all creeds and faiths. During the sixteenth century, following the *Ibadatkhanah* debates, Emperor Akbar became convinced of the veracity of every religion, as we have seen. In the seventeenth century, the writings of Prince Muhammad Dara Shikoh showed the compatibility of Hinduism and Islam and the same did the writings of Pran Nath, the famous *Pranami* saint in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Shah Abdul-Aziz (1745-1823), son and successor of the greatest Islamic scholar-theologian and reformer during the eighteenth century Shah Waliullah Muhaddith Dehlawi (1703-1762), and himself an apt scholar of *Hadith*, studied the *Bhagavad-Gita* and was deeply moved by its philosophy. He was of the opinion that Lord Krishna was one of the greatest saints.<sup>67</sup> But, it was Mirza Mazhar Jan i-Janan (1699-1781), a renowned Naqshbandi Sufi and poet of Delhi who left an indelible impression in the course of evolution of a sense of respect towards Hinduism. He extensively studied Hindu scriptures and became convinced of the divine-origin of the Vedas and so the Hindus had the status of *Ahl al-Kitab* (the people of the Book/Scripture) near him. In a long

<sup>65</sup> S. Abdullah, op. cit., pp. 168-69.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted by M. Habib, *Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period*, vol. I, ed., K.A. Nizami, New Delhi, 1974, p. 23, n. 17.

<sup>67</sup> S.M. Ikram, *Rud i-Kausar*, Lahore, 1987, p. 591.

letter,<sup>68</sup> he has expressed his opinion regarding the ancientness and divinity of the Hindu religion. According to him, the Divine mercy revealed in the beginning of the birth of mankind, a book called as Veda which has four volumes and has commands and prohibitions and has events of the past and of the future, through an Angel Brahma who is the Medium of the creation of the universe, for the reformation of temporal and spiritual needs of the people of India (i.e. the Hindus). All the sects of the Hindus are unanimous in the unity of God and they believe in the creation and ultimate end of the world and in the day of judgement, reward and punishment of the good and the evil, the resurrection and the resuscitation of the body and, thus, show a close proximity to the tenets of Muslim faith. To quote the *Quran*, "And certainly we sent messengers before thee. There are some of them that we have mentioned to thee, and there are others we have not mentioned to thee." It shows that the Almighty graced the land of India with Prophets and Messengers, though their names have not been mentioned in the *Quran*. Mirza Mazhar found little difference between idolatry and *zikr i-rabtah* of the Sufis in which visualisation of the face of the preceptor is being done. And, the formation of the images by the Hindus is not similar to the belief of the pagans of Arabia, who, before the advent of Islam, considered their idols possessing life and the Master of the earth, and not as a means of realisation of God like the Hindus. Prostration prevalent among Hindus is not the prostration of obedience [to God] (*sajdah i-ubudiyat*) but is prostration of greeting (*sajdah i-tahayyut*), which is called *dandwat* and is commonly used by them to salute parents, preceptors and teachers. Even belief in transmigration didn't imply blasphemy.<sup>69</sup> As if responding to this egalitarian outlook put forward by a recognised personality, the Bengali Muslims, it seems, didn't hesitate to offer *puja* at Hindu temples.<sup>70</sup> Satya Pir, a common god was

<sup>68</sup> Kalimat i-Taiyibat, Agra, 1914, Letter No. 14.

<sup>69</sup> S.M. Ikram, Rud i-Kausar, op. cit., pp. 646-649 has translated Mirza Mazhar's aforementioned letter into Urdu. Portions have been taken here from it.

<sup>70</sup> Dinesh Chandra Sen, History of Bengali Language and Literature, Delhi, 1986, p. 793.

evolved and worshipped by both the Hindus and the Muslims in Bengal.<sup>71</sup> The Muslim writers of Bengal in the eighteenth century composed a number of works in praise of Lord Shiva, goddesses Saraswati, Radha and Lord Krishna.<sup>72</sup>

Besides these unique features, "the changing currents of political events did not affect the old institutions of revenue-free grants of the earlier regimes for the purposes of worship and of education. The Marathas, Rajput chiefs, and Hindu *zamindars* continued to grant lands and sums of money to mosques, *madrasas* and shrines while the rulers of Awadh and Nizams of Bengal bestowed lands in endowments and stipends to Hindu temples, religious divines and recluses—*mahants* and *sannyasis*. This helped to create a general climate conducive to the promotion of religious concord and social amity among classes and communities of Indian society."<sup>73</sup> Scholars have brought several documents vis-à-vis such grants to see the light of day.<sup>74</sup> For example, the Emperor Muhammad Shah granted the village of Mustipur Taradih to Mahant Lal Gir, the fourth in succession from the founder Mahant of Bodh Gaya. The yearly yield from this *zamindari* is amounted to several lakhs of rupees.<sup>75</sup> Najib ud-Daulah, the Rohilla Pathan chief of Najibabad, built big houses at Hardwar for the comfort and ease of Hindu pilgrims.<sup>76</sup> In the same way, the Rajput kings and the Maratha Peshwas also granted lands for the maintenance of Muslim shrines.<sup>77</sup> In addition, the Marathas, especially the Sindhias observed Muharram with great fervour. Daulat Rao Sindhia and his officers participated in Muharram procession in green dress like the Muslims.<sup>78</sup> The Mughal court not only financially assisted the Hindu *sannyasis*, *vairagis* and

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 796.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp. 798 ff.

<sup>73</sup> The Core and the Periphery, p. 33.

<sup>74</sup> B.N. Goswamy and J.S. Grewal, *The Mughals and the Jogis of Jakhbar: Some Madad-i-Maash and Other Documents*, Simla, 1967; K.K. Datta, *Some Firmans, Sanads and Parwanas (1578-1802)*, Patna, 1962.

<sup>75</sup> Rajendra Prasad, *India Divided*, Delhi, 1986, p. 35.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> See *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, p. 355 for details.

<sup>78</sup> Surendranath Sen, *Administrative System of the Marathas*, Calcutta, 1925, p. 401.

recluses but their interests were also protected against official excesses. When it was reported to Muhammad Shah that officers of escheat department (*bait ul-mal*) confiscated houses and goods of some hermits in *chakla* Bareilly, the Emperor issued a *farman* restoring the properties of the deceased to the lawful heirs and preventing them from future molestation. The *farman* clearly stated, "The present auspicious reign is the fountain and source of peace and tranquillity to all creatures of God. These *faqirs* are the holy recluses who are revered by the Hindus and the Muslims alike; and they form the army of *dua-goyan*."<sup>79</sup> In the same way, "The Mughal court, in all its declining days, remained impervious to demands of the orthodoxy. At the royal court the arts of music and dance were patronised; within the palace the Hindu festivals of Diwali and Holi and of Basant were celebrated by princes and princesses eagerly and enthusiastically."<sup>80</sup> This pattern of court life presented a contrast to the grim bearings of puritanism characterising the times of Aurangzeb. The later Mughals realised the futility of sticking to the principles and policies that had failed in the past and would now ill-serve the general interests of empire. They adopted an attitude of reconciliation towards Rajput chiefs and *zamindars* in resolving the outstanding problems, and tried to maintain their distinct identity within the broad imperial matrix by conferring on them high ranks and superior positions... In 1720, Muhammad Shah finally abolished *Jizyah* through a royal *farman*.<sup>81</sup> These measures signified a reversal of the policy of religious orthodoxy and rigidity of political postures under Aurangzeb. It would be wrong to attribute these concepts of tolerance to the weakness of empire<sup>82</sup> for at

<sup>79</sup> Jaipur Records, Persian Collection, No. 36, quoted in *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, p. 355; see also *The Core and the Periphery*, p. 33.

<sup>80</sup> Details may be seen in the following chapter.

<sup>81</sup> Akhbarat, Sitamau Collection, III, Part 5, dated 27 December 1720, quoted in *The Core and the Periphery*, p. 31.

<sup>82</sup> "... apart from the fact that the Mughal Empire too had promoted an 'eclectic culture' (witness Akbar and Dara Shukoh), many of the compromises that the Mughal satrapies made with the *zamindars* were signs of weakness and not of strength..." M. Athar Ali, *Mughal India: Studies in Polity, Ideas, Society, and Culture*, ed., Irfan Habib, New Delhi, 2007, p. 355.

the time the conciliatory measures were taken the Empire was yet compact and militarily strong."<sup>83</sup>

The eighteenth century also witnessed the revival and reorganisation of the Chishti *silsilah* under the competent and dynamic leadership of Shah Kalimullah Jahanabadi (1650-1729) and his most prominent successor Shaikh Nizam ud-Din Aurangabadi. The former worked incessantly in Delhi and the latter in Aurangabad (Deccan) to propagate the humanitarian message of the *silsilah*. Shah Kalimullah used to say to his disciples, in conformity with the Chishti traditions, "We and you should not collect *tankas*, riches and commodities, but bring the hearts of the people together."<sup>84</sup> A learned scholar and an inexhaustible writer, he wrote thirty-two books on various topics of mysticism, including *Quran ul-Quran*, a commentary on the *Quran*.<sup>85</sup> *Maktubat i-Kalimi*, collection of his letters addressed to his disciples, shows "the unrest and turmoil through which society was passing, and bears testimony to his courage and zeal as a missionary and reformer."<sup>86</sup> In one of his letters he advised his disciples to establish cordial relations with the Hindus.<sup>87</sup> His disciple Shaikh Nizam ud-Din admitted a number of Hindus into the Chishti *silsilah*.<sup>88</sup> "The Chishti mystics of the eighteenth century also upheld the ideals of tolerance, humanism and equality of religions; they denounced religious exclusiveness and prejudice and tried, by the diffusion among masses of enlightened ideas, to enhance the moral stature of society."<sup>89</sup> They, thus, ventured to narrow down the gulf between the two communities, i.e. the Hindus as well as the Muslims by spreading the ideals of love, tolerance and service to humanity. The rational and homogenizing factors produced by the socio-religious reform movements and by the contribution of individual personalities, both discussed above,

<sup>83</sup> The Core and the Periphery, pp. 31-32.

<sup>84</sup> Quoted in *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, p. 391.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Maktubat i-Kalimi*, p. 74, quoted by K.A. Nizami, *Tarikh i-Mashaikh i-Chisht*, Delhi, 1985, p. 408.

<sup>88</sup> K.A. Nizami, *op. cit.*, p. 401.

<sup>89</sup> *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, p. 349.

"saved Indian society from the communal 'divide' when anarchy menaced its internal cohesion and strength"<sup>90</sup> and it's perhaps the paramount contribution of theirs to the evolution of a close proximity between the two communities. V.P.S. Raghuvanshi has aptly said that, "During the period [i.e. the eighteenth century], the religious life of the people was singularly free from violent symptoms of bigotry, fanaticism, or communalism on account of religion. All accounts impress that inter-communal relations were healthy and the antagonism of sects and creeds had melted into appreciation and tolerance... In the period under review, the relations between Hinduism and Islam show remarkable intimacy of feeling... It would not be rash to conclude that in the eighteenth century religion was more or less a matter of personal faith and not a source of strife in society."<sup>91</sup> It were, in fact, divergent economic interests and competitive secular politics—dynastic rivalries, tribal jealousies, agrarian issues and struggle for power, rather than inter-communal feelings which led to outbreak of fighting between different sections of society thereby hampering its harmony and unity.<sup>92</sup> Thus, there were extra-religious reasons which embittered Hindu-Muslim relations and hindered the normal course of society during the eighteenth century, and not the religious differences ever did it. The armies involved in such warfare were composed of divergent elements drawn from all religions and races, which were always prepared to change their masters according to their convenience—the prospects of pay and plunder. Thus, it was money and not the religion, which was the bone of contention between the Hindus and the Muslims.

However, from the above description it shouldn't be understood that the two communities had completely merged and total unity existed between them. In reality, absolute unity could neither be achieved nor was it desirable as T.S. Eliot pointed out, "Excess of unity may be due to barbarism and may lead to

<sup>90</sup> The Core and the Periphery, p. 33.

<sup>91</sup> V.P.S. Raghuvanshi, *Indian Society in the Eighteenth Century*, New Delhi, 1969, pp. 126, 128.

<sup>92</sup> The Reign of Muhammad Shah, p. 358.

tyranny; excess of division may be due to decadence and may also lead to tyranny; either excess will prevent further development in culture."<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, the examples of similar cultural traditions, religious forbearance and cooperation, mentioned above, will serve to oppose the arguments put forward by those historians who seek to interpret the eighteenth century Indian history in terms of conflicts and communal hostility based on religious issues.

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<sup>93</sup> T.S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, London, 1949, p. 50.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **THE SOCIO-CULTURAL MILIEU**

Man is deeply affected by its environment and the same is true of the community. The land constitutes an integral part of the environment. From time immemorial, man aspired to fly in the sky but in the end he wanted to come back safely on the ground. His attachment to the land induced him to invent such expressions as motherland and fatherland. So it can well be said that a particular geographical territory significantly moulds the thought-pattern and the customs and practices of a social group residing over it for a long time. For that reason, the Hindus inculcated a distinctive outlook about life and developed certain idiosyncratic social practices owing to their long stay over the Indian land. The Muslims continued to be settling down in India during the eighth century and they married local Hindu women. Their progeny, thus, had a mixed blood and they too eventually followed the same path. So a process started what can be best described as the Indianisation of the Muslims or the formation of the Indian Muslims. The Indian Muslims also constituted their majority through the conversion of the indigenous Hindu population who brought their characteristic cultural attitude even to their new religion. So barring the religious practices, differences in socio-cultural outlook between the Hindus and the Muslims were quite indiscernible.

The next step followed by the Muslims during the process of their being Indianised was their gaining proficiency over the indigenous language known as Hindi/Hindawi/Hindustani. Even before the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi, writes Dr. A. Rashid,<sup>1</sup> "the domiciled Muslims in India were familiar with the regional languages, and they made themselves so proficient in the

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<sup>1</sup> A. Rashid, *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, Calcutta, 1969, pp. 235-36.

Indian tongue that they composed verses in Hindustani form of Persian prosody. Awfi tells us that the mosque and the minaret of the city of Cambay were destroyed and 80 of the Muslims residing there were killed by some Hindus at the instigation of the Parsi immigrants. Ali, the *Katib* and *Imam* of the mosque who had managed to escape, approached Jai Simha Sidha Raja (1093-1143) the tolerant and just ruler of Naharwala. While the king was on his hunting excursion, the former submitted a *Qasida* in Hindawi,<sup>2</sup> stating the complaint. The Raja went in disguise to enquire into the matter and was satisfied with the veracity of that *imam's* grievances." Commenting upon the situation prevailed during the fourteenth century, Prof. K.A. Nizami<sup>3</sup> says, "The cultural synthesis which had started almost simultaneously with the settlement of the Mussalmans in the sub-continent reached a fairly advanced stage during the Tughlaq period. The author of *Masalik ul-Absar* informs us that the people of Delhi were eloquent in Persian as well as Hindi languages.<sup>4</sup> Scholars were generally familiar with three languages—Arabic, Persian and Hindawi. Contemporary literature shows that Hindawi was the spoken language. The *Surur us-Sudur* says about a saint: *bazaban hindawi guftand*.<sup>5</sup>

"Brother was addressed as *Bhai*, bread was called *Phulkah*, rice dish was named *Bhat* and so on.<sup>6</sup> A careful study of Barani's *Tarikh i-Firuz Shahi* creates the impression that the author thought in Hindawi, but wrote in Persian. Even a foreigner like Ibn Battutah could not help imbibing the atmosphere and used a number of words of indigenous origin."

After gaining mastery over Hindustani, the subsequent step was the realisation of the veracity of Hindu religion and developing an attitude of reverence and cooperation with it. And, in this respect the Sufis especially the

<sup>2</sup> Awfi, *Jawami ul-Hikayat*, f. 88, quoted by A. Rashid, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> K.A. Nizami, *Studies in Medieval Indian History*, Aligarh, 1956, pp. 74-75.

<sup>4</sup> Shihab ud-Din al-Umari, *Masalik ul-Absar*, Eng. tr. by Iqtidar Husain Siddiqi and Qazi Mohammad Ahmad, Aligarh, 1971, p. 61.

<sup>5</sup> *Surur us-Sudur*, (MS), p. 10, quoted by K.A. Nizami, op. cit.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 104, 106, 65, quoted by K.A. Nizami, op. cit.

Chishtis played an assimilating part. Khwaja Hamid ud-Din Sawali used to say about a Hindu of Nagaur as a *wali* (friend and favourite) of God.<sup>7</sup> Once a slave *murid* (disciple) came to Shaikh Nizam ud-Din Auliya with a Hindu and said, "He is my brother."<sup>8</sup> Shaikh Nizam ud-Din Auliya once observed from the roof of his *Khanqah*, a number of Hindus venerating their idols. "It was strange sight for a Mussalman to see a rational creature worshipping the images his own hands had carved out of stone. But the philosophy of the Shaikh included the infidels also in its tolerant fold. "Every people", he remarked, "has its tolerant (legitimate) Path, its Religion and its Temple.""<sup>9</sup> Prof. M. Habib comments upon this attitude as, "This indeed, was the basis of our religious compromise in the Middle Ages, a compromise sanctioned by the greatest thinkers, scholars and statesmen of India. Underlying all our disagreement was an agreement to differ. For each of us his own creed was the most legitimate and the best; the Hindu was welcome to be a good Hindu and the Mussalman to be a good Mussalman. Islam was just another system of thought in a country already tolerating many opposed philosophies; in a society divided into castes and sub castes, the Mussalmans were but one caste more."<sup>10</sup>

Feeling proud of one's Indian origin was a remarkable phase during the course of the Indianisation of Islam. And that's what Amir Khusrau did—experiencing pleasure over his being an Indian Muslim which is evident in his following couplet:

*Turk i-Hindustanian man Hindawi goyam jawab,  
Shakkar i-Misri nadaram kaz Arab goyam sukhan.*<sup>11</sup>

(I am an Indian Turk and I speak Hindawi tongue. I have no Egyptian sugar so that I may talk in Arabic.)

<sup>7</sup> Fawaid al-Fuad, tr. Ziya ul-Hasan Faruqi, New Delhi, 1996, p. 175.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 338.

<sup>9</sup> M. Habib, Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period, vol. I, ed., K.A. Nizami, New Delhi, 1974, p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted by A. Rashid, op. cit., p. 236.

The above example shows that a significant section of the Turkish ruling class until the fourteenth century was not adamant in retaining its foreign identity, a characteristic feature of the oligarchy of early Turkish rule found its apogee under Balban.

Until the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries, the Muslims have become an important section of the Indian society particularly in Punjab, Kashmir and Bengal where they formed the bulk of the population. This happened by conversion of local populace as well as immigration of foreign settlers though the former played a much significant part. Thus, surrounded by an overwhelmingly Hindu population and also constituting their majority by means of the conversion of indigenous Hindu population, the Muslims can't be remained indifferent to the social customs and practices prevailed in Hinduism; though this process was not unidirectional, the Hindu social attitude and norms were also influenced by the Muslim egalitarian philosophy. With the passage of time, this social interaction between the two communities produced a close identity of approach in dress, diet, life-styles and ceremonies connected with family institutions.

In the areas of food and drink, dressing, social etiquettes and mannerisms both the communities influenced each other. "The upper class Hindus put on a dress quite similar to that of the Muslims, a minor difference being that the Muslims tied the strings of their coats on the right side and the Hindus on the left. The dress of both Muslims and Hindus, especially of the upper class, consisted in a long *qaba* or a coat, a shirt with long sleeves and trousers. Some women adopted the Muslim *ghaghra* or *shalwar*. The Hindu turban was, on the other hand, adopted by the Muslims. Similarly the upper class Hindus borrowed from Muslims a number of their dishes such as *Pulao*, *Kabab* and *Kofta* and also imitated them in food habits, in social courtesy and in

the manners of greetings."<sup>12</sup> The Muslims also imitated the Hindus in matters of food, dress and manners. "They adopted the Hindu custom of chewing the betel leaf [and]... the social etiquette of honouring guests by offering them the betel leaves and areca nuts..., of preparing highly seasoned dishes with spices and chillies, of using various gold ornaments, of using fine cotton and silk fabrics."<sup>13</sup>

"In the social sphere", writes Murray T. Titus, "the influence of Hinduism on Islam has nowhere left a more definite mark than in the creation of caste distinctions, which indicate social status as clearly as they do in Hindu society. As the existence of numerous sectarian divisions is deplored on the religious side by the modern reformers and leaders of the Muslim community, so also are the equally numerous social divisions, which tend to prevent the welding of the Muslims into a single brotherhood, according to the Islamic ideal."<sup>14</sup> Analyzing the various "handicaps to unity and brotherhood" which proved as "the practical difficulties [in] attending adjustment within the social structure of Islam" in India and to which "Islam had never before encountered", Titus says, "First, there were the foreign Muslims, the Arabs, Turks, and Persians, who were at the top of the social scale from the very start because of their position as rulers and the various places they held in the army and government. They had no doubts as to their superiority over the local converts; and in this very attitude we can see the beginnings of a Muslim caste system. Secondly, as the converts from various classes and castes of Hindus came in, from Brahmans and Rajputs to the lowest outcastes, and as the lower caste groups continued to live mostly in their ancestral villages, it was inevitable that there should continue among these Hindu converts the same general feeling of aloofness the one from the other. This was especially true as many of these converts changed their beliefs and customs but little from what

<sup>12</sup> K.N. Chitnis, *Socio-Economic History of Medieval India*, New Delhi, 2002, p. 464.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Murray T. Titus, *Islam in India and Pakistan*, Calcutta, 1959, p. 175.

they were before. Therefore, to-day it is not astonishing that we should find it the common practice to regard Muslims as belonging to two social groups: the '*Sharif zats*' (high castes) and the '*ajlaf zats*' (low castes)."<sup>15</sup>

The traditional four-fold division of Indian Muslims into Sayyid, Shaykh, Mughal and Pathan is not correct<sup>16</sup> for it incorporates only the *ashraf* (high castes), the *ajlaf/arzal* (low castes) have been excluded from it. "The terms Sayyid and Shaykh imply Arabian origin; the former being used exclusively for the descendants of the Prophet's family through his daughter Fatimah, and the latter being used to designate any other of Arab origin. The name Mughul ranks next in importance, because the ruling dynasties at Delhi rank next to those of Arabian origin, which was the nation of the Prophet. Incidentally, the term Mughul includes those of Turkish origin, as the Mughuls of Delhi were not in fact Mughuls or Mongols at all, but Turks [from Central Asia], and this term came to be used in order to distinguish these Islamic rulers from the Ottoman rulers in Turkey. The term Pathan is used to apply, broadly speaking, to all who have had their origin in Afghanistan and the neighbourhood of the great North-West Frontier [the Pushtu-speaking regions]. In addition, these groups have their subdivisions, based on family and tribal origins."<sup>17</sup>

"There is a wide range of caste names found in the second division of Muslims, such as *Julaha*, *Teli*, *Bhat*, *Jogis*, and the like. Most of them indicate occupation, as the *Teli*, who makes oil (*tel*). Most of them are just the old Hindu caste or guild name carried over. Not only do caste names prevail, but many of the original caste prejudices as well, in respect of eating, drinking, and marriage. There is even a caste, called the *Kalal*, in north India, which engages

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>16</sup> "The Hindu tendency to classify the Muslims into four "castes" of Saiyids, Shaikhs, Mughuls and Pathans, which has been accepted uncritically by some Western authors, is really an over-simplification of the main racial distinctions among the Muslims of the subcontinent depending upon their foreign or native origin." I.H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent*, Delhi, 1985, pp. 84-85.

<sup>17</sup> *Islam in India and Pakistan*, pp. 176-77.

in liquor dealing, quite contrary to the precepts of the faith; but in spite of this some of the men of this class have been prominent in public affairs."<sup>18</sup>

No one can claim that those who belong to one of the four divisions mentioned above are all inevitably of the origin indicated by the name. "There is a strong tendency for the converts from among the Hindus to assume a position in one of the recognized groups of *sharif zats* just as soon as practicable. The one that is most affected by such converts is one of the two that imply Arab origin, namely Shaykh... The term Shaykh is widely used as a term of respect for an old man, a learned man, or a great man; hence many converts, who had nothing in their origin to boast of, adopted this respectable designation, and so have formed into a separate caste."<sup>19</sup> The tendency of retaining the former caste titles is also evident in the Muslims of India. "This is particularly true of the agriculture and high caste converts. The *Rajputs*, *Jats*, and *Ahirs* for the most part retain their identity on embracing Islam, and one of the important Muslim families of Oudh still keeps the original caste title *Thakur* along with the title of *Nawab*."<sup>20</sup> There are more cases of such type which can be given as examples. "Among the converts from the *Taga Brahmans* of the western part of Uttar Pradesh the title *Chaudhari* is kept in prominent families; and at Lucknow we find important Muslim princes bearing such titles as the Maharaja of Mahmudabad, and the Raja of Jahangirabad."<sup>21</sup>

Among the Indian Muslims the tendency of upward mobility or 'Sanskritisation' if to borrow the terminology of M.N. Srinivas, is also found and it shows that the four fold divisions were not rigid in themselves. "Converts from the lower caste Hindus and outcastes as a rule go by the name of *Nau-Muslims*, or newly converted Muslims, and must remain in this probationary status for a time, their further advance being dependent on the

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

conduct or prosperity. Thus an old saying is to the point, 'Last year I was a Julaha (weaver); this year a Shaykh; and next year, if the harvest be good, I shall be a Sayyid.'"<sup>22</sup>

Like the Hindus, insistence on caste exclusiveness and thereby maintaining the concept of purity of blood was widely and resolutely prevalent among the Indian Muslims, which restricted marriage relations to one single ethnic group. Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali on the basis of her personal observations remarks, "The Syaads [Sayyids] are very tenacious in retaining the purity of their race unsullied; particularly with respect to their daughters; a conscientious Syaad regards birth before wealth in negotiations for marriage; many a poor lady, in consequence of this prejudice, lives out her numbered days in single blessedness."<sup>23</sup>

The Muslims in India also became ascertain and practiced some other social practices common to Hindus. Customs regarding the dead—taking out a dying person from his bed and the posthumous rituals for example *soim/teeja* (third), *chehlum* (fortieth), *shashmahi* (six-monthly) and *barsi* (anniversary) "were performed in the name of the deceased, have been borrowed from the Hindus with just a change of names."<sup>24</sup> Disapproval of remarriage of the widows was another such practice which the Muslims learnt in the Indian surroundings imitating the example of the upper-caste Hindus, although "Islam encourages the re-marriage of widows and the Prophet Muhammad himself married a widow as his first wife."<sup>25</sup> The situation prevailed in the eighteenth century may be understood through the description of Mirza Qatil which runs as, "The nobles of the cities and respectable persons of the towns, are similar to the Hindus in preventing their daughters from re-marriage even if they became widows at the age of sixteen or even less than this. Due to their ignorance and

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>23</sup> Observations on the Mussulmauns of India, ed., W. Crooke, 2 vols., Delhi, 1973, I, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Muhammad Umar, Islam in Northern India During the Eighteenth Century, New Delhi, 1993, p. 428

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 429.



illiteracy they do not observe the Islamic practices. Nevertheless those, who resort to this act, are considered mean, low and disgraceful by them. If the (widowed) daughter of a man on her own accord establishes illicit relations with thousand men, it did not matter for him; but willingly and with his consent, he would not arrange her re-marriage."<sup>26</sup>

Hindu influence is most visible among the Muslims in the observance of rituals and customs right from child-birth up to the wedding ceremony. "The *satwansa*, *naumasa*, *chhatti*, *mundan*, *chilla*, *zachcha ko tarey dekhana* (showing of the stars to the mother), *rat jaga* (vigil), and *salgirah* and the festivities on these occasions were originally Hindu customs; these were adopted by the Muslims."<sup>27</sup> Similarly, the wedding customs followed by the Muslims and the Hindus were almost similar barring the basic marriage ritual. "The customs of *mangani*, *mandawa*, *tail charhana* (oiling of the body of the bride and bridegroom), *ubtan malna*, *kangana bandhna*, *nek ghari dekhana* (consultation of auspicious time for the actual ceremony), *sehra*, *maqna* for the bride, decoration of the bride and bridegroom, *sachaq*, *hinna bandi*, the groom party (*barat*) led with great pomp and show, accompanied by fire-works, light, music, and dancing parties, yellow and red garments of the bride and bridegroom, colouring of the palms of the bride and bridegroom, chanting of songs called *sathni*, keeping of iron weapon by the bridegroom, the bridegroom's mounting the horse-back while going to the house of the bride, *dhangana*, *nichhawar utarana*, distribution of the betel leaves and *sharbat* after the *nikah*, *matkiyan bharna*, *arsi musaf*, *chauthi* and *raushan chauki* and gifts showered on the lap of the bride etc. had been borrowed by the Muslims from the Hindus. Besides there were several minor customs which the Muslims observed on this occasion and all others seem to have been of Hindu origin. Following the traditions of the Hindus, Muslims in the countryside often married their sons and daughters

<sup>26</sup> Haft Tamasha, Lucknow, 1875, p. 120, quoted by Muhammad Umar, op. cit., p. 429.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 429-30.

in childhood. The bride did not go to live with her husband immediately after the completion of the nuptial ceremonies but continued to stay on with her parents for some years. When she attained maturity, the *gauna* ceremony was performed and she was sent to her father-in-law's house. Many rituals were performed at this time (*rukhsati*)."<sup>28</sup>

"Tying of the *narah* to the *moosul* was one of the rites performed during the wedding. The *narah* is a cord of many threads dyed red and yellow; the *moosul* the heavy beam in use where rice is to be cleansed from the husks. The custom was altogether of Hindu origin."<sup>29</sup>

The effect of Hindu culture is also evident in the male and female ornaments and dresses, women's toilets, and hair dressing of the Muslims.<sup>30</sup>

Belief in various superstitions and astrology, faith in lucky and unlucky days and hours, belief in good and bad omens, faith in odd numbers, faith in evil spirits, belief in witchcraft and enchantments<sup>31</sup> by the Muslims in India are various other examples, exhibiting the impact Hinduism exerted upon Islam.

The desire of *tawiz* (amulets) to ward off evils was one such demand made by the Muslims that troubled the great personalities of medieval India right from the time of Baba Farid.<sup>32</sup> This was again a Hindu custom which had its origin in the *Atharva Veda* in which various measures of witchcraft and exorcism have been outlined to ward off ghosts and spectres.

Commemoration of Hindu festivals by the Muslims and *vice versa* is a remarkable feature of the socio-cultural life of medieval period, which shows the extent of amity, goodwill and harmony prevailed between the two communities. The Muslims with much fervour adopted some of the Hindu festivals to celebrate them. They celebrated prominent Hindu festivals, e.g. Holi, Vasant Panchami, Rakshabandhan, Dasehra, Diwali and Janamashtami

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 430.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 431.

<sup>30</sup> See *idem*, pp. 431-33 for details.

<sup>31</sup> See *idem*, pp. 433-38 for details.

<sup>32</sup> K.A. Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj i-Shakar*, Delhi, 1998, pp. 58-59.

with enormous zeal and passion, though the initiator of this process to be imitated subsequently by the commoners was the ruling class.<sup>33</sup>

"Amongst the later Mughals, Shah Alam II, composed several poems describing Holi which was celebrated inside the palace. Red colour was sprinkled, *gulal* was rubbed on faces, dance and music was performed by courtesans, court dancing girls and the *qauwals*. The introduction of *qauwali* even gave it a Muslim colour."<sup>34</sup> With the establishment of autonomous regional powers, the festival of Holi gained added importance. The Nawabs of Awadh and the Nawabs and nobles of Bengal were very particular about celebrating Holi and they actively participated in it. Nawab Sadat Ali Khan and Shuja ud-Daula took keen interest in this festival.<sup>35</sup> Following the treaty of Alinagar on 9<sup>th</sup> February, 1757, Nawab Siraj ud-Daula proceeded to Murshidabad and participated in Holi festivities held in his palace of Mansurganj.<sup>36</sup> Following the custom of the ruling dynasty of Murshidabad, Mir Jafar Khan celebrated Holi as well.<sup>37</sup> Ghulam Husain Khan Tabatabai, the author of *Siyar ul-Mutakherin* comments on the widespread prevalence of Holi celebration amongst the Muslim noblemen as, "As for the Holi itself, it is again a festival of Hindu institution, but held so sacred amongst our delicate grandees, and so very obligatory, that they never fail to spend a deal of money in dancers, and such kind of spectacles, and especially, in making presents to low people, who, at such a particular time, are in possession of acknowledging those favours by the liberty of giving to the donors, as well as to each other, a great deal of abusive and shameful language, and that too, not in obscure terms,

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<sup>33</sup> "The Muslim emperors, provincial governors, and court nobles set an example for the lower strata of society by freely celebrating Hindu festivals." Muhammad Umar, op. cit., p. 415.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Karam Ali, Muzaffar Nama, f. 123b, quoted by M. Umar, op. cit., p. 416.

<sup>37</sup> "... he [Mir Jafar] spent some days in celebrating the festival of Holi in the Chehel sutun, that building of stone raised by Zain ud-Din Ahmad Khan. Not content with that, he ordered a sandy spot in the river, through which ran a small stream, to be surrounded by cloth-walls, and there he spent some days in fulfilling the rites of that Gentoo festival, the last of which consists in throwing handful of dust and coloured earth at each other, and syringing coloured water on one another's clothes..." *Siyar ul-Mutakherin*, tr. M. Raymond, II, p. 266.

but in the broadest and coarsest language, and by naming everything by its proper term, without any regard to rank, station, or decency."<sup>38</sup>

This festival was so widespread among the Muslims "that more or less every Muslim poet has composed verses in praise and description of Holi. These poems show that the Muslims arranged the Holi assemblies, arranged dance and music parties, with all their accompaniments."<sup>39</sup>

Muslims also celebrated Vasant Panchami which is said to have been introduced among the Muslims by Amir Khusrau, but there is no conclusive evidence to prove it. "After the death of Aurangzeb, down to the time of Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal emperor, the festival was celebrated at the court. Shah Alam II observed rituals of this feast inside the palace with great pomp and show. Members of the royal family played with flowers. *Gurwas* (kinds of water-pot) of flowers were made and were carried on their heads by the ladies. Music and exchange felicitations formed the main items of the functions. After putting on ornaments, the ladies adorned themselves in purple dresses."<sup>40</sup>

The Mughal aristocracy, going after the example set by their masters, celebrated this festival at great expense to themselves. Nawab Saulat Jang of Bengal with the ladies in his harem celebrated Vasant Panchami with merrymaking and amusement.<sup>41</sup>

Dargah Quli Khan gives a vivid account of the manner in which the people of Delhi observed this festival which lasted for seven days.<sup>42</sup>

Muslims also observed Rakshabandhan or Rakhi, a very popular festival of the Hindus. It is said that Rani Karmavati, widow of Rana Sangram Singh (Rana Sanga) and mother of Rana Vikramajit of Chittor sent a *rakhi* to Humayun to seek his help against the ruler of Gujarat, Bahadur Shah when the latter

<sup>38</sup> Siyar ul-Mutakherin, tr., III, pp. 144-45. See also pp. 145-46, fns. 102 and 103.

<sup>39</sup> M. Umar, op. cit., p. 416. See p. 449, n. 24 for the details of such poetic works.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 417.

<sup>41</sup> Siyar ul-Mutakherin, tr., II, p. 137.

<sup>42</sup> Muraqqa i-Dehli, tr. Chander Shekhar and Shama Mitra Chenoy, Delhi, 1996, pp. 42-44.

besieged Chittor in 1532 to punish Vikramajit.<sup>43</sup> Akbar made it a court festival and got *rakhis* tied on his wrist.<sup>44</sup> The practice was reinstituted by Jahangir.<sup>45</sup> But afterwards, the festival was given up till it was restarted by Shah Alam II.<sup>46</sup>

Vijay Dashmi, commonly known as Dasehra is observed to commemorate Lord Rama's victory over Ravana, thus, a victory of righteousness over evil. Regarding the importance of this festival in the eyes of Hindus, Abul Fazl observes, "On this day they pay particular attention to their horses and decorate them and place green sprouts of barley on their heads, and all workmen venerate their tools, and it is held as a great festival and particularly for the Kshatriyas."<sup>47</sup> Celebration of this festival was continued by Jahangir.<sup>48</sup> It was observed under the later Mughals. "In the reign of Jahandar Shah, who was keenly interested in the spectacular aspect of the festival, an artificial wooden effigy representing the city of Lanka, was made and burnt."<sup>49</sup>

The Nawabs of Bengal like Saulat Jang also commemorated Dasehra.<sup>50</sup>

Diwali or Dipawali, meaning the row of lamps, is celebrated in commemoration of Lord Rama's arrival to Ayodhya, his homeland and the welcome extended to him by its inhabitants. "Diwali was celebrated and certain of its customs were observed by the Muslims and in the Mughal court. Under the later Mughals, the festival was celebrated with all its customary features."<sup>51</sup> Shah Alam II celebrated it inside the palace and he himself has described the rites performed in his poetic style. A grand illumination was held. The ladies went to worship the goddess Saraswati, dressing themselves in finery, wearing sixteen kinds of ornaments, with marks on their foreheads and palms coloured

<sup>43</sup> Satish Chandra, 'Mughal Relations with the Rajput States of Rajasthan: The Foundations', in *Mughal Religious Policies, the Rajputs and the Deccan*, New Delhi, 1993, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup> Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, tr. Lowe, II, p. 269.

<sup>45</sup> Tuzuk i-Jahangiri, tr. Rogers and Beveridge, I, p. 246.

<sup>46</sup> M. Umar, op. cit., p. 418.

<sup>47</sup> Ain i-Akbari, tr. Jarrett, III, p. 352.

<sup>48</sup> Tuzuk i-Jahangiri, tr., I, p. 245; II, pp. 38, 100, 101, 176.

<sup>49</sup> M. Umar, op. cit., p. 419.

<sup>50</sup> Siyar ul-Mutakherin, tr., II, p. 140.

<sup>51</sup> Jahandar Shah arranged grand illuminations thrice in every month. For details see, William Irvine, *The Later Mughals*, I, p. 192.

with *mahndi*; they carried trays full of *puris*, *kachauris*, and *samosas*, accompanied by dance and music parties. Flower-garlands and felicitations were exchanged. Govarddhan-*puja* followed the Diwali, Shah Alam II observed this too and the ladies sung a song especially meant for this occasion, known as *mangalachar*.<sup>52</sup>

Mubarak ud-Daula,<sup>53</sup> fourth son of Mir Jafar, the Nawab of Bengal, used to spend a lot of money on Diwali celebrations. Ghulam Husain Khan remarks, "... every one of his dependants suffer real distresses for want of being paid their salaries, yet he sets apart another sum of five or six thousand rupees for performing the rites of Diwali, which is a festival of Gentoo institution..."<sup>54</sup>

Mirza Qatil informs us that barring a few orthodox Muslims, many Muslims got participation in gambling and those who didn't partake in it, at least arranged illuminations in their houses.<sup>55</sup>

Janamashtami, the birth anniversary of Lord Krishna, was celebrated with religious fervour by the Hindus who commemorated many ceremonies on this day, but the most important was the observance of battle between Lord Krishna and his maternal uncle Kans. Paper statues of Kans were made and a battle was exhibited showing the discomfiture of Kans and the victory of Lord Krishna.<sup>56</sup> Some Muslims cut the paper statues of Kans, drank the honey which they had earlier filled in its stomach considering it his blood.<sup>57</sup>

There was another festival which is obviously of Hindu origin but was adopted and practiced by the Muslims. It is the Bera of Khwaja Khizr. The custom of giving offerings to Khwaja Khizr<sup>58</sup> is of Hindu origin.<sup>59</sup> It is said that the Nawab of Bengal Siraj ud-Daula introduced and popularised this festivity

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<sup>52</sup> M. Umar, op. cit., p. 420.

<sup>53</sup> Siyar ul-Mutakherin, tr., III, p. 142.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>55</sup> Haft Tamasha, pp. 74-75, quoted by M. Umar, op. cit., p. 420.

<sup>56</sup> Haft Tamasha, p. 77, quoted by M. Umar, op. cit., p. 421.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> See Siyar ul-Mutakherin, tr., III, pp. 142-44, fn. 99 for the details of this festival.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 142-43.

among the Muslims of the Eastern Provinces.<sup>60</sup> The succeeding Nawabs of Bengal made it an official annual festival and continued to observe its rituals.<sup>61</sup> With the passage of time, this festival got popularity throughout the Northern India and the Muslims of Delhi and Awadh observed it.<sup>62</sup> It seems that the ceremonies related to Shab i-Barat are almost similar to those of Sraddha-Kanya-gata, an essentially Indian festival. On this occasion the Hindus distribute alms in the name of their deceased ancestors, either in the form of money or in kind.<sup>63</sup> The Muslims adopted it and took delight in lighting of lamps and fireworks which formed a part of Shab i-Barat festivities.<sup>64</sup>

It was not possible that the Hindus may remain indifferent towards the Muslim festivals. They not only participated in the Muslim feasts but celebrated many of them, barring the Eid, as if they are their own. Hindus not only observed Dwazdahum (the twelfth)/Barah Wafat, the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad and Yazdahum (the eleventh), birth anniversary of Ghaus ul-Azam Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani but also keenly participated in the mourning of Muharram. Mirza Raja Ram Nath 'Zarrah' used to celebrate the rituals of Yazdahum of Ghaus ul-Azam.<sup>65</sup> He also observed Muharram. During the *ashura* (the tenth day of Muharram), he wore green dress, distributed *sharbat* and alms in the form of money to the needy and carried the *taziya* upon his shoulders.<sup>66</sup> Balmukund 'Huzoor' was much attached to the observance of Yazdahum.<sup>67</sup> Likewise, Sukh Jiwan, the governor of Kashmir, observed every month the feast of Yazdahum and Barah Wafat and distributed cooked food among the poor.<sup>68</sup> The Marathas, especially the Sindhias observed Muharram with great fervour.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>62</sup> M. Umar, op. cit., p. 421.

<sup>63</sup> Ain i-Akbari, tr., III, p. 352.

<sup>64</sup> William Irvine, op. cit., II, p. 257.

<sup>65</sup> M. Umar, op. cit., p. 387.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

Daulat Rao Sindhia and his officers participated in Muharram procession in green dress like the Muslims.<sup>69</sup>

"A classical example of cultural fusion through religious institutions", writes Prof. Zahiruddin Malik, "may be chosen from the *urs* ceremonies and other festivals in which crowds of men and women adhering to different faiths took part with pious zeal. Throughout the year, in every city and town the anniversary of one saint or another, was observed at the shrines in which members of all communities without any distinction of caste or creed participated. At the shrines the pious prayed and meditated, the musicians sang devotional songs, the rich distributed money, and the common people tied strings on railings of the grave to invoke the saint's favour for success in their worldly affairs... Related to *urs* was the festival of *chharis*<sup>70</sup> which was also in commemoration of saints. Here again the Hindus and the Muslims joined together to celebrate the function and make it a success."<sup>71</sup>

Reciprocating to the aforementioned spirit of amity shown by the Hindus, the Muslims enthusiastically participated in Hindu fairs and festivals, thus indicating the broad character of social and cultural harmony. The fair held annually at Garh Mukteshwar was an important one in which a large number of Muslims took part with their Hindu friends and enjoyed bathing in the river Ganges and other happy scenes.<sup>72</sup> Many Hindu festivals were held at Delhi, especially at the Kalka Ji temple. Ghulam Ali Khan Naqvi observes, "Though this fair is a fair of the Hindus, yet Muslims go there for recreation."<sup>73</sup> Muslims also participated in the fair of Kailash held in the garden of Jiwan Das, located near Delhi.<sup>74</sup> Likewise the Muslims of Punjab participated in indigenous

<sup>69</sup> Surendranath Sen, *Administrative System of the Marathas*, Calcutta, 1925, p. 401.

<sup>70</sup> Literally meaning stick, but actually it was standard, a long pole decorated with fine cloth of various colours, and to which many fans, feathers and cocoa-nuts were attached.

<sup>71</sup> Zahiruddin Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, Bombay, 1977, p. 351.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 352; M. Umar, *op. cit.*, p. 388.

<sup>73</sup> Imad us-Sadat, *Kanpur*, 1897, p. 15, quoted by M. Umar, *op. cit.*, p. 388.

<sup>74</sup> Mir Qadatullah 'Qasim', *Tazkira i-Majmua i-Naghz*, ed., Mahmud Shairani, 2 vols., Lahore, 1933, II, p. 144, quoted by M. Umar, *op. cit.*, p. 388.



Hindu fairs as is borne out by Sujan Rai Bhandari who tells us that the Muslims partook in the fair famous as Mela i-Baisakhi.<sup>75</sup>

Tracing various changes occurred in the lives of Hindus following their being employed under the rulers of Awadh and its diverse outcomes, Prof. Muhammad Umar comments, "The Hindus of Awadh in general and the Kaisthas in particular were... employed in great numbers by the state government in different departments, and some of them held the posts of *diwans* and *wakils* from the time of Saadat Khan Burhan ul-Mulk onward... As a result of this association, many Hindu officials overcame their inhibitions as to food and drink, and had Muslim cooks and in some cases the Muslim servants washed their hands and faces. The Kaisthas kept the Muslim professional women in their houses as their wives and had no hesitation in accepting victuals, betel-leaves and drinks from the hands of these women. Instead of performing the rituals prescribed in Hindu religion, some of them even offered prayers five times according to the Muslim religion and most of them tied the strings of their *qabas* and *angarkhas* on the left like the Muslim *mullas*. Similarly, instead of raising temples, some of the rich Hindus constructed *Imambaras* and in observance of the rituals of the *ashura i-Muharram*, they followed the rituals of the Muslims. Apart from the Kaisthas, other Hindus, too, distributed *sharbat* and made earnest supplication for the health of their children like the Muslims in the name of the martyrs of Karbala. Hindus also spent money in the observance of the rituals of *nazr wa-niyaz* (vows and options) in which the Kaisthas were again foremost."<sup>76</sup>

As far as various benefits derived by India from the advent of Islam and the Muslim rule are concerned, Dr. J.N. Sarkar has beautifully summed it up in a lecture on 'Islam in India' which is as follows:

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<sup>75</sup> Khulasat ut-Tawarikh, ed. Muzaffar Hasan, Delhi, 1918, p. 66, quoted by M. Umar, op. cit., p. 388.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pp. 387-88.

- Restoration of touch with the outer world, including the revival of an Indian navy and sea-borne trade, both of which had been lost since the decline of the Cholas.
- Internal peace over a large part of India, especially north of the Vindhya.
- Uniformity secured by the imposition of the same type of administration.
- Uniformity of social manners and dress among the upper classes, irrespective of creed.
- Indo-Saracen art, in which the medieval Hindu and Chinese schools were blended together. Also a new style of architecture, and the promotion of industries of a refined variety (e.g. shawl, muslin, and carpet-making, inlaying, etc.).
- A common *lingua franca*, called Hindustani or Rekhta, and an official prose style, mostly the creation of Hindu *munshis* writing Persian.
- Rise of our vernacular literature as the fruits of peace and economic prosperity under the empire of Delhi.
- Monotheistic religious revival and Sufism.
- Historical literature.
- Improvement in the art of war, and in civilisation in general.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, it can safely be concluded that during the ten long centuries of their coexistence in India, Hinduism and Islam mutually affected and brought about significant changes in each other. Until the eighteenth century they were no longer the same as they were in the eighth century when they first met. Commenting upon the situation prevailed during the eighteenth century as a consequential of this socio-cultural synthesis, Prof. Zahiruddin Malik observes, "The resultant of this social interaction produced a closed identity of approach

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<sup>77</sup> From *The Hindu*, Madras, in *The Indian Social Reformer*, Bombay, March 31, 1928, quoted by M.T. Titus, op. cit., pp. 183-84.

between the two communities and gave impetus to the growth of a sense of integration in national life. In dress, diet, life-styles and ceremonies connected with family institutions, the dividing line between the Hindus and the Muslims of the same social stratum was very thin. Whatever differences in manners and customs were found among them were based on class and regional distinctions and not on religious cleavages. A Muslim in the Deccan resembled his Hindu neighbours more closely than his co-religionist either in Punjab or Awadh.”<sup>78</sup> Moreover, neither the Hindus nor the Muslims were organised as a religious community during the eighteenth century because “unlike medieval Europe Indian society was not divided into believers and infidels but ethnically and regionally. The Persian chroniclers of eighteenth century sought to identify and classify major social and cultural groups on the basis of their common racial and ancestral origin and territory. Some of the categories into which societal divisions was perceived by them were Afghans, Mughals, Jats, Bundelas, Kashmiris and Deccanees. The terms Deccanees and Marathas were used interchangeably by the writers of north India. The terms ‘Hindus’ and ‘Muslims’ were rarely used and then only to indicate the bulk of population when affected by some calamity like famine, loot and massacre, price-rise and unemployment. The term ‘Mughal’ did not represent any particular religious community or caste but a heterogeneous class comprising divergent racial and religious groups who were directly associated with the imperial administrative apparatus. Sawai Jai Singh (a Rajput) was as much a Mughal in outlook and moorings as Khan i-Dauran (an Indian Muslim).”<sup>79</sup> And, this lack of community-consciousness may be credited as perhaps the prime reason for the absence of communalism during this period. Although, there existed, of course, minor dissimilarities and frictions which show the lack of absolute unity and

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<sup>78</sup> The Reign of Muhammad Shah, pp. 353-54.

<sup>79</sup> Zahiruddin Malik, *The Core and the Periphery: A Contribution to the Debate on the Eighteenth Century*, Presidential Address: Medieval India Section, Indian History Congress, 51<sup>st</sup> Session, Calcutta, 1990, pp. 28-29.

complete fusion between the two communities, but it is also true that perfect unity could neither be achieved nor was it desirable for it hinders the further progress and development of the culture and civilisation.

Prof. Muhammad Umar rightly observes that, "A dialogue between Hinduism and Islam continued to be in progress in the eighteenth century. It was largely a friendly one, and both sides influenced each other from minor matters of ritual, fashion to higher levels of thought, as in respect of pantheism and resurrection. The legacy, therefore, that the eighteenth century left behind was a distinctly positive one as far as in the process of reconciliation between the two great religions and cultural traditions is concerned."<sup>80</sup>

During the eighteenth century, religious syncretism together with social similitude encouraged the feeling of integration in national life. It denotes a sense of balance, prevailed between the two major communities of India which was due to the similarity of their socio-cultural outlook. Unfortunately, this equilibrium couldn't remain the same in the succeeding nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Due to the rise and growth of communalism which was a direct outcome of the British policy of divide and rule, the insignificant differences between the two communities were considered to be insurmountable and, at the same time, different types of dissemblance and differences had been created deliberately between the Hindus and the Muslims particularly following the great revolt of 1857 which was the last chef-doeuvr of Hindu-Muslim unity, thus, a minor wound was made cancer. This damaged both the legacy of the eighteenth century of which we have talked above, as well as the warp and woof of the fabric of amity and harmony.

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<sup>80</sup> Islam in Northern India During the Eighteenth Century, p. 447.

## **CONCLUSION**

Almost from its beginning, Islam found its foremost representation in two institutions—kingship and Islamic mysticism (Sufism). Both had been developed fully within the ambit of Islam quite before the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi. The pattern of relationship between India's two foremost religious communities had been substantially affected by these two institutions. The state headed by the Sultan determined its approach towards its non-Muslim subject in accordance with various political needs which were necessary for the safety and sustainability of the empire. A typical example of such outlook reflects in Sultan Jalal ud-Din Khalji's acceptance of finding himself unable to stop the Hindus who "pass every day by [his] palace blowing their conches and beating their drums on their way to worship their idols by the bank of the Jumna."<sup>1</sup> He further laments, expressing doubt over his being a true Muslim king, that despite his name being read in every Friday sermon and preachers style him 'the Defender of the Faith', "the enemies of [his] faith [i.e. the Hindus] in [his] capital and before [his] eyes—live in luxury and splendour and arrogantly pride themselves over the Mussalmans on account of their prosperity and wealth."<sup>2</sup> While accepting their presence a necessary evil and also a means of earnings, he concludes, "I leave them in their luxury and pride and content myself with the few '*tankas*' I get from them by way of charity."<sup>3</sup> This attitude was not only "the last whine of impotent fanaticism" as Prof. M. Habib appropriately calls it but it was also an example of political shrewdness because Jalal ud-Din "whose common sense was superior to his theology" only preached intolerance but not practiced it<sup>4</sup> since he knew it very well that "Mussalmans who considered intolerance a duty found themselves utterly

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<sup>1</sup> Ziyauddin Barani, *Tarikh i-Firuz Shahi*, Bib. Ind., p. 216, quoted by M. Habib, *Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period*, vol. I, ed., K.A. Nizami, New Delhi, 1974, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

helpless; persecution became a sort of ideal for bigots, which practical men threw into lumber-room of useless speculations.”<sup>5</sup> And, Jalal ud-Din neither wanted to make himself feel helpless nor was he a bigot; he was, of course, a practical man who knew the art of striking balancing between different classes very well. What was true to the Sultanate of Delhi was also applicable to the Mughal Empire and to the whole medieval period that, “the emperor-sultan of Delhi, whether they liked it or not, had to ascend their throne under conditions which were acceptable to the Hindus” because for the Sultans “who depended for the larger part of their taxes, their army and their material strength on their Hindu subjects, such a policy [of plunder and spoiling followed by a foreign despot like Mahmud of Ghazni] was impossible.”<sup>6</sup> So, the state became a chief vehicle in promoting amicable relationship among different groups of people, initially influenced by its own stability-concerns since “communal conflict would have meant unavoidable ruin [to it].”<sup>7</sup> But, it is true to a great extent to the Sultanate of Delhi; the nature of the Mughal Empire was somewhat different. It didn’t suffer as much by worries of its durability as compared to the Delhi Sultanate and this sureness provided it the leisure to be evolved as largely secular state. The broad features of the Mughal state as Akbar provided it being its architect remained very much the same even during the reign of Aurangzeb. This framework remained operative in the phase of political downfall during the eighteenth century and was borrowed with some variations by the successor states—Awadh, Bengal, Hyderabad and even the Marathas copied some of its features.

Akbar developed the state first as a multi-religious empire and after 1579, tried it to give the shape of a supra-religious entity. The objective was to make it relevant in a pluralist society like India by incorporating within its fold the majority section professing religion different from that of the ruling class

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

and, thus, expanding its social base and to root it firmly into the soil of the country. Although, the attempt to shape up the empire as a supra-religious institution greatly enraged the *ulema* who thought it as an endeavor to eradicate their influence. This structure remained almost the same under Jahangir and Shah Jahan with slight variations. Jahangir followed the same line of Akbar but offered least challenges to the *ulema* as compared to his father. He also persistently insisted on justice and benevolence to counter his despotism. What Shah Jahan really did that he presented a compromise between the *Shariat* and practical requirements, thus, while officially declaring the state to be an Islamic one, showing reverence to the *Shariat*, and observing in his personal life its injunctions, he adjusted his government according to the needs of the hour, i.e. he didn't reject any of the liberal measures set up by Akbar. This adjustment proved to be a precursor to the reign of Aurangzeb since by granting the fundamentally Islamic character of the state even in theory, no excuse was left to establish it on a strict implementation of the *Shariat*. Until 1687, the Mughal state headed by Aurangzeb was by and large an orthodox type of state in which *ulema* had enjoyed too much importance—but not to the extent of formulating state policies. This phase is marked by a number of instances of temple-destruction and the bigoted policy followed towards people professing other religions especially Hinduism which reached its zenith with the re-imposition of *Jizyah* in 1679. Although, all the examples of desecration of temples were politically-motivated and were the following of an old tradition started about sixth century A.D. onwards. Neither the re-imposition of *Jizyah* nor its remission in the Deccan in 1704 was religiously-motivated; both of them were motivated by purely political purposes as Aurangzeb's other so-called puritanical moves were themselves in nature. Being a regressive tax, *Jizyah* only increased the grief of the poor and the urban masses and also demonstrated "the practical impossibility of basing the state in India even formally on the *Shariat*, and of maintaining a distinction between the Hindu and the Muslim

subjects on that basis.”<sup>8</sup> The latter part of Aurangzeb’s reign from 1687 to 1707 may be denominated as the period of political pragmatism and shedding off the religious idealism for the emperor, which best found its expression in the *Kalimat i-Taiyyabat*, a collection of Aurangzeb’s advice to his sons and grandsons during this phase. Through expressing an exalted notion of kingship in accordance with Timurid and Indian values, emphasizing on justice as one of the highest ideals, advising proper discharge of the duties of sovereignty and attention to the necessary worldly tasks as being truly religious, and directing the protection of the subjects as the source of happiness in this world and hereafter, Aurangzeb was trying to come close to the notion of secular state as was built up by Akbar and was retained by his son and grandson, as is evident by frequent and endorsing references to Shah Jahan, as also, in a few cases, to Akbar made by Aurangzeb in these letters. This and other tolerant and prudent moves made by Aurangzeb during this phase indicate that the atmosphere at the court was not as restricted and intolerant as we are sometimes led to believe. And, this certainly contributed in making the eighteenth century the age of liberalism and cultural syncretism. The state remained the promoter of amicable relationship among various religious persuasions even during the eighteenth century despite its reduction from a despotic power to a mere mediator among various groups due to the decline and disintegration of the Mughal Empire, fall out of its administrative mechanism, growth of party factionalism in the Mughal court, development of centrifugal tendencies in the political sphere and rise of regional powers which slashed its powers considerably. During the same time, like a boon in disguise, the Mughal culture attained its most flourished form and continued to exercise a great formative influence on the texture of society for a long time. Although, as we have seen, there were other significant factors too, pertaining especially to the eighteenth

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<sup>8</sup> Satish Chandra, ‘Jizyah and the State in India during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century’, in *Mughal Religious Policies, the Rajputs and the Deccan*, New Delhi, 1993, p. 183.



century, that played a far more critical role in fostering harmonious relationship between Islam and Hinduism. Besides the tendency of religious syncretism during the eighteenth century, "in the sphere of social relations the Hindus and Muslims exerted deep influence on each other's mode of living and pattern of behaviour. The Muslims learnt and accepted many social practices of the Hindus; while the Hindu social attitude and norms were influenced by the Muslim egalitarian philosophy. The resultant of this social interaction produced a close identity of approach between the two communities and gave impetus to the growth of a sense of integration in national life. In dress, diet, life-styles and ceremonies connected with family institutions, the dividing line between the Hindus and the Muslims of the same social stratum was very thin. Whatever differences in manners and customs were found among them were based on class and regional distinctions and not on religious cleavages... The ceremonies associated with child birth—*mundan* or *aqiqa*, or marriage—*mangni*, *mehandi*, *mundwa*, *barat*, *ru-numai*, *bidai* etc. were common to the Hindus and the Muslims. Even some funeral rites like *tija* and *daswan* were observed by both of them."<sup>9</sup> It was this closeness of socio-religious identity of both the communities, their resemblance in the cultural sphere and the resulting 'growth of a sense of integration in national life' which had been disturbed during the British period. The maxims *divide et impera* and *divide ut regnes* (both denoting 'divide and rule') were utilised by the Roman ruler Caesar and was a major requirement of the British empire since the key factor of this technique was creating or encouraging divisions among the subjects to prevent alliances that could challenge the sovereign. For the accomplishment of this aim, different types of dissemblance and differences have been created between the Hindus and the Muslims especially following the great revolt of 1857. Communalism which was an inevitable consequence of adoption of such type of policies, also over-

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<sup>9</sup> Zahiruddin Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, Bombay, 1977, pp. 353-54.

emphasised and validated such differences; but it is, of course, beyond the scope of the present study.

The second demonstrating manifestation of Islam during the medieval period was its mystic dimension—*tasawwuf*, representing Islamic piety and devotion and, thus, epitomizing the humane and ethical aspects of Islam in comparison to the former institution of kingship. Two aspects of Sufism in India are questionable—the exact status of the Sufis, i.e. were they somehow an extension of the state or rather had an independent entity, and their role in the propagation of Islam in India. R.M. Eaton<sup>10</sup> has suggested that patronage to Sufi shrines, especially the ones belonging to the Chishti *silsilah*, by the reigning dynasty was a part of state-formation during the medieval period as it both legitimised and Indianised their rule. Although the early mystics of the Chishti order showed a stance of aloofness towards the state<sup>11</sup> whereas the Suhrawardi saints mixed with rulers, participated in political affairs, accepted government posts and accumulated wealth,<sup>12</sup> both served commoners in the sense that “through the Suhrawardis, petitions from the people were presented to rulers and their periodic visits to Delhi were eagerly awaited. Assistance from the withdrawn and ascetic Chishtis who had turned their backs on the world, was also sought to avert such calamities as draught and panic, for example, during times of political crisis. They [the Chishtis] offered consolation to the masses and reminded them, as well as members of the ruling classes, through their own advice and example, of the ethical side of Islam.”<sup>13</sup> It was, thus, their role of soother and pacifier and also of hope-inducer that they were “until the middle of the nineteenth century... the natural religious guides of the people from whom men from all cross-sections of society solicited spiritual guidance

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<sup>10</sup> R.M. Eaton, ‘Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States’, in *Essays on Islam and Indian History*, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 100-104.

<sup>11</sup> K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the 13<sup>th</sup> Century*, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 255-263.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 263-272.

<sup>13</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. I, New Delhi, 2003, p. 398.

and worldly advice.”<sup>14</sup> It seems that there existed a relationship of give and take between the state and the Sufis. The state provided a peaceful and conducive environment to the Sufis to settle down and to establish their hospices to meditate and contemplate and also to disseminate the tenets of their respective orders, and their presence proved to be a consolidating factor for the state<sup>15</sup> since it legitimised and legalised it as an Islamic institution, though the Sufis, in general, not always directly supported the state.

Muslim population in India, as elsewhere, grew through the means of proselytisation and by the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries the people of Punjab, Kashmir and Bengal had become predominantly Muslims. This happened chiefly through the mass-conversion of the indigenous Hindu population, though the immigration of the foreign settlers also played a part but not so much as compared to the former. In south India, references of forced conversion are rare, whereas in the north, we find occasional examples of conversion by political force too. Although, this met with little success and in the process of mass-conversion, the part played by forced conversion had limited significance. It was peaceful or voluntary conversion done by the Hindus due to various reasons and incentives which formed the bulk of Muslim population in India during the medieval period. Although various factors—political, economic, social and religious—were at work during the process of Islamisation, at times working simultaneously and sometimes a single factor was instrumental, yet the part played by the Sufis in this process can't be under-estimated.<sup>16</sup> It is debatable whether they actively participated in the

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<sup>14</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. II, New Delhi, 2002, p. 458.

<sup>15</sup> “The early Turkish Sultans stood in need of the support of the religious classes in order to consolidate their power and build up an integrated and compact polity in India. When Iltutmish ascended the throne of Delhi, he tried to employ as many religious men as compatible with the efficiency of the administration. Since the Chishtis were not prepared to associate themselves with the government, the Sultan turned towards the Suhrawardis who extended their full support and cooperation to him and accepted the posts of the *Shaikh ul-Islam* and the *Sadr ul-Wilayat*.” K.A. Nizami, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

<sup>16</sup> “... among the sixty-six millions of Indian Musalmans (the figure is of the census of India, 1891), there are vast number of converts or descendants of converts, in whose conversion force played no part and the only influence at work were the teaching and persuasion of peaceful missionaries. This class of

process of conversion or it was only their blessings and auspicious aspirations which prompted the people to adopt the faith of their benefactors. At the same time, it is also arguable that to which category the constant persuasions made by the Sufis of some *silsilahs* to the followers of the religion of majority to change their ancestral faith should be placed—is it any type of forced conversion or it falls to the group of peaceful conversion?

The early Chishtis from Khwaja Muin ud-Din Chishti to Shaikh Nasir ud-Din Chiragh i-Dehli were truly the master of perfection (*sahib i-kamal*) and were the embodiment and epitome of sympathy and compassion. They naturally heed no attention to the propagation of faith for it was insufferable for them to insist anybody to change his faith since they were the Islamic role models in whom the spirit of Islam found its fullest expression and to them action always spoke louder than words! To Shaikh Nizam ud-Din Auliya, it was the company of pious men and not their preaching which made an impact on Hindus to be converted<sup>17</sup> and he was far too humble to include himself among those whose impact could transform the Hindu mind. To quote the Jew who was the neighbour of Khwaja Bayazid Bistami, when asked as to why he had not accepted Islam, he replied: "Which Islam?—If Islam was that which Bayazid believed in and practiced, then it was beyond my reach, and if it was what you people practice, then I am ashamed of that Islam."<sup>18</sup> At another place Shaikh Nizam ud-Din Auliya observed that some of the Hindus, though convinced of Islam being a true religion, were not prepared to declare it openly.<sup>19</sup> Both the examples prove the futility of applying force in converting people to Islam, it was their choice and consent which prompted them to change their ancestral religion. And, it also proves that constant persuasions

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converts forms a very distinct group by itself which can be distinguished from that of the forcibly converted and the other heterogeneous elements of which Muslim India is made up." T.W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, rep., New Delhi, 2002, p. 254.

<sup>17</sup> *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad*, tr. Ziya ul-Hasan Faruqi, New Delhi, 1996, p. 338.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 340.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

made by the Sufis of some *silsilahs* to the Hindus to change their faith falls into the category of peaceful/voluntarily conversion because without their prior consent it could not be done forcibly. The *Jawahir i-Faridi*, a later work completed in 1623, gives credit to Baba Farid to convert a number of Hindu tribes of Ajodhan.<sup>20</sup> "This legend was naturally fostered in order to enhance the prestige of these newly Islamicized tribes."<sup>21</sup> Unlike the prevailing Chishti custom, Syed Muhammad Gesu Daraz learnt Sanskrit and acquired knowledge of Hindu epics to prove false the beliefs contained in Hinduism. He claimed to have defeated many Brahmans in debates but he failed to convert any of them due to the latter's disavowal of promise.<sup>22</sup> There is also no evidence to prove that Shaikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi ever converted anyone, "but he was pleased to encourage a Hindu convert to be steadfast in the new faith considering it to be a divine grace bestowed."<sup>23</sup> The only exception in the passive Chishti attitude towards proselytisation were Shah Kalimullah Jahanabadi, his successor Shaikh Nizam ud-Din Aurangabadi and Shah Fakhr ud-Din, son and successor of Shaikh Nizam ud-Din. Shah Kalimullah "wanted to see Islam in India extremely flourishing and his feeling about the community was perturbed to convey the message of Islam to all ears"<sup>24</sup> though he didn't insist that Hindus become converted before being instructed in *zikr* [remembrance of God].<sup>25</sup> He sent his dearest disciple Shaikh Nizam ud-Din to Deccan for the work of preaching and reform.<sup>26</sup> Through the missionary efforts of Shaikh Nizam ud-Din, a lot of Hindus became converts to Islam.<sup>27</sup> Shah Fakhr ud-Din continued both Shah Kalimullah's and his own father's

<sup>20</sup> A History of Sufism in India, II, p. 429.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> A History of Sufism in India, I, p. 254.

<sup>23</sup> A History of Sufism in India, II, p. 429.

<sup>24</sup> K.A. Nizami, *Tarikh i-Mashaikh i-Chisht*, Delhi, 1985, p. 397.

<sup>25</sup> A History of Sufism in India, II, p. 430.

<sup>26</sup> *Tarikh i-Mashaikh i-Chisht*, p. 396.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 401.

proselytisation techniques.<sup>28</sup> For him, "instruction in the name of Allah should not be postponed until after Islamicization, as the name itself was dynamic and attracted people to Allah."<sup>29</sup>

What the Chishtis did in the latter part of the seventeenth century and during the eighteenth century, "the Sufis of the Shattariyya, Qadiriyya and the Naqshbandiyya orders who began establishing their *khanqahs* during the fifteenth century were deeply aware of the proselytizing traditions of their ancestors in Persia and Central Asia, and brought their knowledge to bear upon Indian conditions in order to gain converts."<sup>30</sup> Through their mastery over yoga and being famous for their ability to perform supernatural feats, the Shattariyyas made a number of converts in the Bengal region.<sup>31</sup> The Qadiriyyas who succeeded the Suhrawardiyyas in the Sind and Punjab, owing to their ability to perform miracles won over many converts in the region. Even Mulla Shah Badakhshi, the celebrated *pir* of Prince Dara Shikoh, converted a number of Hindus to Islam.<sup>32</sup> Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi thanks to his extremist views, would scarcely have been able to draw Hindus to his *khanqah*, "some of his *khalifas* and their successors who were unable to compete with other Sufis in mystic fields, would probably not have hesitated to offer hopes of salvation and other less significant favours in this world and hereafter in the name of the alleged influence of their *pirs*."<sup>33</sup> Shah Abdul Aziz claimed to have converted hundreds of Hindus.<sup>34</sup> However, besides these direct efforts and persuasions, there were other driving factors which prompted conversion during the fifteenth-eighteenth centuries. Many Hindus, especially at the village level, who believed that their difficulties got sort out by the spirits of the deceased saints,

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<sup>28</sup> A History of Sufism in India, II, p. 430.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 426.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 426-27.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 428.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

later embraced Islam in fulfilment of their vows.<sup>35</sup> Conversion of tribes following the instance of their leaders was a common happening during Medieval Indian history.<sup>36</sup> The village-Sufis were considered to be the possessor of cosmic power by Hindus as well as animists and they might not have dithered to convert their dependents.<sup>37</sup> The Shattariyya training in the use of divine appellations to get control over spiritual and cosmic powers promoted the Islamisation of Bengalis since both Hindus and animists believed in the miraculous power of names.<sup>38</sup> In large towns, but primarily in the rural areas and small towns, the tombs of local *pirs* and fictitious mausoleums, attributed to eminent Sufis such as Ghaus-*pir* or Ghaus ul-Azam, and the graves of local martyrs both genuine and false were—and even now—the sole consolation of their dwellers in their anguish and trouble and consequently attracted large groups of Muslims and Hindus for it was the concept of *barakah* (blessing) emanating from them.<sup>39</sup> It was but natural that Islam of the neo converts was as syncretic as it was with the majority followers and it was the graves of saints and martyrs which “remained more meaningful for the spiritual lives of village Muslims than the puritanical details of the *Shariat*.”<sup>40</sup> It seems that Sufism exerted its influence upon the aboriginal population primarily as of inspiration and it was its emotive-humanitarian appeal which made it so acceptable among them. There were a variety of reasons, methodology and procedure of whose is still to be understood fully, both in the form of compulsions and incentives, which prompted the native people to leave their ancestral religion and adopt a new one, although one thing for sure that ‘the sword theory’ played very little part in it. It was the spiritual beauty of Islam preached and practiced by the majority of the Sufis, except a few one who showed religious zealotry, and not

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 432.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 431.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 431-32, 458.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 432.

the use of sword which incited the indigenous populace to abandon the religion of their forefathers and adopt a new one in search of various opportunities.

Sufism also contributed in moulding the mood and temperament of the Urdu poetry and added an interesting dimension to the lyrics of born poets like Mir Taqi Mir (1723-1810) and Ghalib (1797-1869), who unhesitatingly could say displaying themselves to be beyond the religious scholasticism:

*mir ke din-o-mazhab ko ab puchhte kya ho unne to,  
qashqa khincha dair mein baitha kabka tark islam kiya.*

[What about to enquire the religious persuasion of Mir? For long he had renounced Islam by applying vermillion on his forehead and by sitting in the temple.]

*wafadari ba shakl i-ustwari asl iman hai,  
mare butkhane mein to kabe mein gado birehman ko.*

[Loyalty shown in the form of firmness is the true religion, so the Brahman must be buried in the Kaaba although he had died in the idol-temple (for he had shown great steadfastness in his allegiance to God).]

It was not the clash of Hinduism and Islam, if there was anything such, but was that of ideology—between extremist and liberal, “one of which advocated the policy of treating the Hindus as perpetual enemies, humiliating them and excluding them from all share in political power, and the other which favoured a policy of leniency to the Hindus once they had submitted, and of trying to win over the Hindu Rajas to a position of active alliance by various concessions...”<sup>41</sup> or, it can be said that it was the conflict between the adherents of *Wahdat al-Wujud* and that of *Wahdat al-Shuhud*. “The *Wujudiyyas* were unable to support the existing religious differences and disputes and did not object even to idol worship or polytheism, so long as the object of worship was God Himself. The *Shuhudiyyas*, on the other hand, did not hesitate to assert militantly the superiority of [radical Islam]... over all religious communities. To

<sup>41</sup> Jizyah and the State in India during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, p. 176.



the *Shuhudiyyas*, Islam was not only the antithesis of Hinduism but could survive only at the expense of the latter. Conversely, the *Wujudiyys*, despite the interest of some of their followers in converting Hindus to Islam, advocated the peaceful co-existence of both religions and the attainment of their religious and mystical goals through their own religious worship, prayers and spiritual exercises."<sup>42</sup> The extremist trend "could call to its assistance the powerful forces of dogmatism, taking a rigid stand on the letter of the law, which took little account of the situation prevailing inside India."<sup>43</sup> The liberal trend fascinated political expediency since "as political realists, the Sultans and their leading nobles were not prepared to pursue policies which might create unnecessary political difficulties for them."<sup>44</sup> Since extremism was alien to the conditions prevailed in a pluralist society like India and the so called liberalism was not based on principles but on expediency, both were doomed to be degenerated. The deteriorated form of liberalism promoted wayward tendencies and dissipation of morals, whereas worsening of extremism pulled their followers down to mud of bigotry and hypocrisy.<sup>45</sup> And, through their ambush-rebuff even during the eighteenth century, it was neither extremism nor liberalism which survived, but it was realism which finally subsisted and prevailed throughout. This sense of realism found its best and the most beautiful expression in the prophetic words of 'Ghalib' who could see the reality and truth amidst the plethora of deception through his insight:

*ham muwahhid hain hamara kaish hai tarke rusum,  
millatein jab mit gayin ajza i-iman ho gayin.*

[I (literally, we) am a monotheist, I believe in abandoning traditional (religious) practices. When religious differences (literally, religions) disappear, the (remaining) essence becomes the basis of the (one true) faith.]

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<sup>42</sup> A History of Sufism in India, II, p. 460.

<sup>43</sup> Jizyah and the State in India during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, p. 176.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> A History of Sufism in India, II, pp. 460-61.

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